



# CIANO'S DIARY

1939-1943





# CIANO'S DIARY

1939-1943

*Edited with an Introduction by*  
MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

*Foreword by*  
SUMNER WELLES



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## FOREWORD

I FIRST met Count Ciano in Rome on February 25, 1940, and I saw him for the last time on March 19 of that year. During most of the intervening period I was away from the Italian capital. Gauged by time alone, my knowledge of him both as a man and as a statesman must be regarded as exceedingly slight. Yet in the circumstances under which I knew him, and in the nature of the discussions which brought us together, I find a measure of justification for undertaking to write this introduction to Count Ciano's Diary and to offer my own estimate of its author.

In the early winter of 1940 I was sent by President Roosevelt as his personal representative to visit the capitals of the Allied nations and of the two Axis powers in order to report to him upon the situation in Europe and upon the possibilities for the establishment of a just and lasting peace. As is now well known, no such possibilities existed. The Nazi Government was already fully prepared for an immediate all-out offensive, and the German onslaught was inevitable unless the French and British governments were willing to submit to a Hitler-dominated Europe. The Soviet Union was not to be invaded until more than a year later, and Japan's aggression upon the United States was still almost two years away.

The prospects for the Western democracies already seemed very dark indeed, although not yet so hopeless as they became a few months later.

The ability of the United States to arrest the catastrophe was tenuous. European public opinion generally believed that American sentiment was largely isolationist and that it would prevent President Roosevelt from undertaking any effective measures of assistance to England or to France when Germany's full war effort was finally exercised. The Axis governments were convinced that, should the United States finally rouse itself from its lethargy, adequate military preparation, even for self-defence, would prove to be so long delayed as to be of no practical value. Only one thing could have prevented the

German offensive in the west, and that was the knowledge on the part of the Nazi leaders and of the German General Staff that the United States was fully armed as well as determined to use force if necessary to prevent the outbreak of a new world war.

In such circumstances the maximum of what the United States could hope to accomplish was to prevent the entrance of Italy into the war at the side of Germany. Even though Italy's so-called non-belligerency was being notoriously utilised to render all assistance short of war to the Germans, an actual declaration of war by Italy would necessarily imply a far greater threat to France and to Yugoslavia, as well as a vital thrust at the British life-line through the Mediterranean to the Suez Canal.

With the exception of a very small group of Fascist leaders, the Italian people as a whole, as well as every potent influence within Italy, were vehemently opposed to a declaration of war. While this opposition was primarily due to a general fear and hatred of Germany and of its Nazi Government, it also stemmed from the popular conviction that, however great the artificially engendered friction with Great Britain and with France might be, the future of Italy would be far more secure in a world in which the Western Powers remained to the fore than in a world in which Nazism had become the sole authority. Finally, there was a great mass of Italian public opinion which was hostile to the thought of war because of its realisation that Italy would commit a fatal error by taking part in a war of which the outcome was problematical, and as a result of which, whoever the victors might be, the Italian people had nothing to gain and everything to lose.

Count Ciano shared the viewpoint of all of these groups. Of all the men possessing high authority within the Axis governments, he was the only one who made it clear to me, without subterfuge and without hesitation, that he had opposed the war, that he continued to oppose the war, that he foresaw nothing but utter devastation for the whole of Europe through the extension of the war, and that every effort which he personally could undertake would be exerted to prevent the entrance of Italy into the conflict.

His efforts, of course, were futile, as were the efforts of all other Italians. One man, and one man only, the Dictator Benito Mussolini, made the decision which plunged Italy into the holocaust and brought about the tragedy from which the Italian people have already so grievously suffered, and from which they will continue to suffer for many years to come.

Italy had prostrated itself before Mussolini. He was thus enabled to achieve an almost complete control over every form of activity in Italian life. From top to bottom the Italian social system had become wholly corrupt through the corroding influence of Fascism. The structure had already become so rotten by 1940 that no effective means existed whereby the will of the Italian people could combat the fatal determination of their Dictator.

The members of what was politely termed the Italian Government were no more than Mussolini's lackeys. Count Ciano himself was wholly subservient to him. Count Ciano was a man who lacked neither personal dignity nor physical courage, and yet I have seen him quail at an interview with Mussolini when the Dictator showed irritation. The will of the Duce, however perverse, however ignorant, and however blindly mistaken the Fascist leaders knew him to be, was law. For no one in Italy from the King to his ministers, from the generals to the industrial magnates, dared to oppose him.

I first knew of the existence of this Diary, now for the first time published in full, from Count Ciano himself. He showed it to me and read me excerpts from it in my first conversation with him. There is no question of its authenticity, nor have I any reason to believe that in the last tragic days before his execution as a "traitor", at Mussolini's order, he had the opportunity or the desire to make any changes in what he had previously written. The record stands as he wrote it down day after day from the beginning of 1939 until he was removed by Mussolini from his position as Minister for Foreign Affairs in the early winter of 1943.

I believe it to be one of the most valuable historical documents of our times. Those who will read the Diary in its complete text will obtain an opportunity to gain a clearer insight into the manner of being of Hitler's Germany and of



Mussolini's Italy, and a far more accurate understanding of the degradation of the peoples subjected to Hitlerism and to Fascism during the years when almost the entire world trembled before the Axis partners. They will find in the Diary a hitherto unrevealed picture of Germany's machinations during those fateful years. They will see perhaps more vividly than before how stereotyped was Hitler's course in utilising his most solemn pledges to other governments, and by no means least to his ally, Italy, as a means of deluding them as to his real intentions. What is perhaps most valuable of all is the picture which the Diary presents of Italy under the climactic stage of Fascism.

The partially unconscious analysis of Mussolini, undertaken by a man who was not only his son-in-law but who also obviously admired him, and who loyally served him until only a few months before his death, could hardly be more devastating. As Count Ciano states in one entry, "action", no matter what kind of action it might be, was the only spring to which Mussolini's nature responded. The Dictator's obsession that Germany's armed might could overcome every other force in the world, his black rancour, his ruthless cruelty, his dense ignorance of the world at large, his gross failure to comprehend the power which men's passion for freedom represents, and, above all else, his utter contempt for the Italian people themselves stand out unforgettably in the passages of this Diary.

To those Italians who actually believed in Mussolini and who sincerely regarded him, at least during the years prior to World War II, as Italy's saviour, these appraisals of his fellow countrymen made by Mussolini in complete confidence to his son-in-law will come as a revelation:

"The Italian race is a race of sheep. Eighteen years is not enough to change them. . . . We must keep them disciplined and in uniform from morning until night. Beat them and beat them and beat them. . . . To make a people great it is necessary to send them into battle even if you have to kick them in the pants. This is what I shall do."

In his Diary Count Ciano shows himself to be precisely what he was in life—the amoral product of a wholly decadent period in Italian, and, for that matter, in European, history. To him morality in international relations did not exist. He was wholly

seized of the concept that only might makes right. The question whether the Italian people should be consulted before the nation was plunged into war, since it would be their lives which would be lost, and since it would be they who would make the sacrifices involved, simply did not occur to him.

Yet where he showed himself far superior to the man who was his father-in-law, his political chief, and finally his executioner, was in his ability to see clearly where Italy's real security lay. He appears to have had no illusions from the time of the German occupation of Austria as to the danger inherent to Italy in German ambitions and in the extension of Hitler's sway. Time and again in his Diary he emphasizes his belief in the accuracy of the reports which come to him of the indications given by members of the Nazi hierarchy of Germany's ultimate intention to seize Trieste from the Italians and to occupy Italy's northern plains.

The Diary proves that, as a statesman, Ciano saw the major issue accurately. He was under no illusions as to what a German-dominated Europe would imply for Italy. He was convinced that only through the defeat of Germany could any world order be established in which a sovereign Italy could survive.

But what is equally apparent is Ciano's total inability to change the course upon which Mussolini had embarked. He relates the warnings against Germany which he gave to Mussolini and the occasional efforts which he made to establish some better relationship between Italy and the Western Powers. There is, however, never a sign that either his advice or his efforts were fruitful. During the earlier years in which he held high office he was wholly under Mussolini's sway. During the last two years of his life at times he made attempts to rally support among the members of the Fascist Grand Council in order to block Mussolini's growing subservience to the increasingly overbearing German taskmaster. Finally, at the crucial meeting of the Fascist Grand Council on July 25, 1943, he took a leading part in the coup d'état against Mussolini, and the Dictator was at length overthrown. It was then far too late. The Armistice was consummated, but the Italian people were already prostrate.

As an individual, Count Ciano, like most human beings, possessed his qualities and his defects. He was sincerely attached to his parents, and to all those who had been close to him in his early youth. He was a devoted father to his three children.

Of medium stature, well set up, with aquiline features, he possessed both dignity and personal charm. In intimate conversation or at informal gatherings there was not the faintest trace of the pompous and self-conscious Fascist dignitary who appeared in public and who so sedulously aped the absurd mannerisms of the Duce himself. As a companion he was frank, often surprisingly outspoken, and possessed of a keen wit and of a mordant sense of humour. He spoke well and fluently and with no inconsiderable knowledge of modern history. He was keen in his perception of the relative significance of men and of events.

Corrupt in a financial sense he undoubtedly was. Whether he was personally responsible for the assassination of several enemies of the regime in the earlier years of his tenure of the Foreign Office, as has often recently been alleged, I have no conclusive evidence. But I am inclined to the belief that Count Ciano possessed many of the qualities of the men of the Italian Renaissance, and that such crimes would have by no means been outside the bounds of his toleration.

Galeazzo Ciano was the creature of his times, and the times in which he had his being are the least admirable mankind has known for many centuries.

SUMNER WELLES

## INTRODUCTION

OF ALL the documents which have come out of the 1939-45 war and the events which led up to it, Ciano's Diary is the most interesting, and will probably prove in the end the most useful to historians. I can imagine some future Gibbon, or even Lytton Strachey, coming upon it with a gasp of delight. This is because Ciano, like Boswell, was too vain to hide the true workings of his mind and the true character of his aspirations, and too foolish to be aware of how completely he was giving himself and those about whom he wrote away. If he had been cleverer, his Diary would have been less revealing; if he had been better, his Diary would have been worse. Day by day he recorded his thoughts, hopes, conversations, all that had happened to him, against the background of his inordinate vanity, and in the end, waiting in a prison cell at Verona to be taken out and shot, engineered the publication of what he had written in the fond hope that thereby he would revenge himself on his father-in-law and former patron, Mussolini.

What he achieved actually was to provide the world with one more record, incomparable in its naïveté, of how futile a pursuit is power, and how certainly those who pursue it become enmeshed in their own deceits and stratagems. For this at least he deserves gratitude. In exposing Mussolini he perforce exposed himself, and all who take the path they followed. Without knowing it, he presented Mussolini as Macbeth, with Hitler for the Horrid Sisters. Duce he was, but the promise of yet greater things to come proved irresistible. Like Macbeth, he struggled sometimes against its seduction, but in the end succumbed, as many others did, to the Führer's fearful certainty.

The actual events which Ciano recounts are too near, and their tragic consequences too present, to require his confirmation. It is not his account of the play which makes his Diary so valuable, but his revelation of the character of the players and of their relationships with one another. They formed, indeed, a remarkable and grotesque company—Mussolini, the

central figure, with his alternating moods of sensible doubt and fatuous confidence, his affectionate contempt for his Italians and contemptuous respect for his German associates, his passion to emulate Hitler's military successes and participate in the loot they procured, combined with a passion almost equally strong to see Hitler humiliated and his plans frustrated; the little King, Victor Emmanuel, only present survivor, now in exile, but up to Mussolini's downfall continuing precariously to reign because the Duce could see no convenient way of getting rid of him, managing even from time to time to administer shrewd little blows, annoyances, to his tormentor; Ciano himself, a quite ludicrous personage, full of ludicrous contradictions, strutting his hour or two on the stage in Mussolini's shadow, aping his very appearance, and then, full of self-righteousness, writing the last self-righteous sentences in his Diary before being executed; and then Hitler, whose phosphorescent presence held them all in awe even though his turgid sentences sent them to sleep, whose will was felt even when his purposes were challenged, in whose destiny they had inescapably involved themselves like little meteors caught in the system of a larger planet blazing through space to inevitable destruction.

These were the principals. Smaller figures crowded the stage—Goering weeping for the Collar of the Annunziata which Ribbentrop had been given, scandalous Goebbels, Laval contemptuously kept waiting, Croats, Hungarians, Rumanians, all manner of miscellaneous Central and Eastern European figures, dancing into the glare of Axis power and out of it if they could as its light faded. Some of these last survive still, living reserved and austere by Lake Geneva or in Portugal, finding quiet corners as best they can, and glad not to have been eminent enough to deserve attention at Nuremberg or elsewhere.

Galeazzo Ciano was born at Leghorn on March 18, 1903. His father, Costanzo Ciano, served with distinction in the Italian Navy in the 1914-18 War. There are frequent respectful references to him in the Diary, and there is no reason to suppose that Ciano's elaborately depicted grief at his death was not

authentic. According to Ciano, Mussolini had decided to nominate Costanzo Ciano as his successor. The family was rich but far from aristocratic. On this point Ciano is misleading, and frequently implies that it was distasteful for an aristocrat like himself to mix with parvenus like Ribbentrop and even Mussolini. He and his wife Edda, Mussolini's daughter, take counsel together on one occasion as to whether it would be tactful to tell the Duce that in fact the English are not in the habit of wearing dinner-jackets for tea. Mussolini, he implies, could scarcely be expected to know about so nice a point in polite behaviour, but at the same time he did not want to hurt his father-in-law's feelings and parade his own superior upbringing by drawing it to his attention.

Costanzo Ciano associated himself with the Fascist movement in the very early days, and when Mussolini became head of the Italian Government was promoted to Admiral, ennobled, and made Minister of Communications. In this office he was presented with, and took full advantage of, opportunities for enriching himself. He became enormously rich, and served as President of the Fascist Chamber of Deputies, one of those hand-picked, obedient legislatures designed to give an air of democratic respectability to totalitarian regimes which the fall of the Axis and the triumph of the Four Freedoms and Atlantic Charter have only served to multiply.

Galeazzo Ciano studied law in Rome, and tried his hand, not very successfully, at dramatic and art criticism. His aspirations as a young man were literary, and he produced, among other writings, a version of Hamlet which attempted to portray the Prince of Denmark as a particularly sanguine individual. This ingenious and ambitious project was a failure. Ciano's cheerful Hamlet was booed off the stage, and his creator decided to follow his father's advice and enter the diplomatic service. At this time he was far from sharing Costanzo's enthusiasm for Fascism, and perhaps if his play had been more successful he might have pursued literature and liberalism instead of embarking upon what turned out to be a dazzling career as a Fascist.

After a series of minor diplomatic posts in South America, China, and at the Vatican, Ciano married Edda Mussolini, and

thenceforth, not surprisingly, his advancement was rapid. The marriage, despite its obvious usefulness to the groom, may have been based on an element of mutual esteem. Ciano's references to Edda are rare and mostly disapproving, but there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of his affection for his children. In his last Diary entry he refers to his "wife, who in my hours of sorrow has revealed herself as a strong, sure and faithful companion". They did not see a great deal of one another, and in that strange, vulgar, Balzacian period when Mussolini ruled in Rome, dazzled the obsequious and shocked the respectable by their mutual and separate extravagances.

Ciano's first appearance on the international stage was as a member of the Italian Delegation at the World Economic Conference in London in 1933, presided over by Ramsay MacDonald, who was already approaching his final incoherent decrepitude, and at which two voices much to be heard thereafter also made their international début—Hitler's through Hugenberg, and Roosevelt's through Raymond Moley. Two years later Ciano became Under-Secretary for Press and Propaganda, then a member of the Fascist Grand Council, and the following year, at the age of 33, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Sumner Welles, in his Foreword, depicts Ciano as genuinely opposed to Italian participation in the war. This is undoubtedly true. At the same time, like Mussolini, Ciano was dazzled by the prospect of illimitable loot which Hitler's military successes held out. Like Mussolini, too, against his better judgment, he found it difficult at times not to believe that the Führer must succeed. In any case, his fortunes were bound up with those of his father-in-law, whom he invariably obeyed whatever doubts about the wisdom of his conduct he may have recorded in his Diary. If the Nazis had won instead of losing, it would not have been very difficult for him to represent himself as having from the first foreseen their victory and the advantages which Italy might derive from it. The Diary would not have needed so very much revision to present that moral. If, thanks to a Nazi victory, Ciano had been granted the "quiet old age" he had hoped for to transform the raw material of his Diary into an Autobiography we may

be sure that his theme would have been Mussolini's prescience and his own brilliant execution of the Duce's policy.

In other words, Ciano had no policy, any more than Mussolini had. He and the Duce were totally unprincipled. His doubts about the wisdom of Italian participation in the war were based on fears, which Mussolini except in occasional moments of lucidity was too far gone in megalomania to share, of the inadequacy of Italy's armed forces. His doubts along with all record of them would have disappeared with victory as surely as they were confirmed by defeat. He, too, played only to win, and no other consideration weighed with him. If his last appeal to history, his expectation that "an honest testimonial to the truth in this sad world may well be useful in bringing relief to the innocent and striking at those who are responsible", is human and therefore in its way touching, it is no more so than the convicted criminal who in all sincerity proclaims his good intentions when he is beyond hope of clemency.

It was this opportunism of the Fascist regime which made the efforts of Chamberlain and Halifax to come to terms with it so futile. As the Diary shows, every attempt they made to be reasonable and considerate was interpreted as weakness, and only confirmed Mussolini in his conviction that all strength and resolution lay on the German side. After a conversation with Chamberlain he complained to Ciano that Chamberlain bore little resemblance to Drake, which indeed was true as far as it went. Goering, from the Duce's point of view, produced a much nearer approximation to an Elizabethan adventurer than the British Prime Minister. Appeasement in this case, as it always will, only made war more certain. Those who exercise authority irresponsibly suffer from the disability that they cannot understand authority in any other terms; no traffic is possible with them except in terms of power. Inability to understand this has already cost the world most dearly, and may yet cost it more dearly still.

The great quality of Ciano's Diary, however, is not that it demonstrates such principles, often enough demonstrated but never learned, or that it goes over once again the now wearisome tale of Europe's progress to rubble and despair, but that



it records the mental processes, sudden rages, lechery and sentimentality, flashes of insight, inconceivable stupidities, ingenuousness and shrewdness of the buffoon who for a quarter of a century imposed himself on the Italian people, and for the greater part of that time on Europe, as a considerable statesman. No picture of Mussolini hitherto available has come near to this one for verisimilitude. It is more denigratory than the most savage and hysterical attacks of his detractors, and more sympathetic than the most adulatory biographies of his admirers. Whoever at any time is interested in Mussolini will turn to Ciano. There the man is in all his folly and humanity.\*

He was in his way a prodigy—as Ciano shows, a revolutionary who became a dictator without ever ceasing to be a revolutionary, an adventurer who made good without ever ceasing to be an adventurer, so coarse that his closest associates were sometimes shocked, so sensitive that an obscure newspaper attack would make him want to go to war. As his astonishing career moved to its close he more and more reverted to the attitude of mind of his youth. His loathing of the Monarchy, of the rich and the respectable, of the Church and especially of the Vatican, would have done credit to any shabby anarchist thumping his soap box at Hyde Park Corner. Characteristically, he explained away the scandal of his association with Clara Petacci and her disreputable and corrupt family by saying that such things were regarded as normal at the time of the Borgias. There was no consistency in him, no constancy even in his perfidy and self-dramatisation. The strange confusion of his mind and emotions was reflected in the confusion of his directions to Ciano. Contrary to the generally held opinion, no one could have been less resolute or unwavering than he. From day to day his intentions varied—now he would go to war and now he would not, now he would march with Germany and now he would double-cross Hitler and promote Germany's ruin. He was utterly unstable and incalculable.

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\* An interesting confirmation of Ciano's account of Mussolini's character is provided by a novel the Duce wrote as a young man, "The Cardinal's Mistress". In this absurd and over-written novel, less competent but scarcely more vulgar than Disraeli's novels, he describes all he hoped for, all he most admired, all the longings of his heart, when he was still poor and unsuccessful.

It was his relations with Germany which provided the torment of his later years and brought about his final ruin. From the moment that he first met Hitler in Venice in 1934, when the carefully assembled crowds cried "Long live the Duce!" and quite ignored the Führer in his belted mackintosh, until his humiliating rescue from his own people by the Sicherheitsdienst ten years later, the Führer haunted him. It was the Germans' strength that impressed and maddened him, especially by contrast with his own countrymen, who obstinately resisted becoming martial however much he bellowed at them and made them goose-step, do what he absurdly called the "passo Romano", under his window. Though he sought comfort by assuring himself that he was cleverer than Hitler, he knew that his position was incomparably the weaker. He had to do everything by the exercise of his wits, whereas, as he often enviously reflected, Hitler had the massive weight of German strength behind him, and had no Victor Emmanuel or Vatican to plague him. That he got as far as he did is the measure both of the sharpness of his wits and of the feebleness of his assailants. We think of him now strung up by the feet in the market-place at Milan with his Clara beside him and an enraged crowd spitting and kicking and hurling insults at him, and conveniently forget that at the time of the Munich Pact he was spoken of most respectfully by many who now would wish their words forgotten, and that at different times he won the approval of Winston Churchill and Bernard Shaw, not to mention Rabindranath Tagore.

Having attached himself to Hitler, Mussolini's position became increasingly subservient and humiliating. He was left in ignorance of the Führer's purposes; when he decided to undertake a military adventure on his own account and attack Greece, it was a miserable fiasco, and he had to appeal to Hitler for help; at his much advertised meetings with the Führer his position became increasingly that of a subordinate receiving instructions from his superior officer. At one of these meetings he rather pathetically made it a condition that he should not be expected to eat with his German associates. He did not want them to see that he was on a diet and could only eat slops, for fear that they should laugh at him and think of

him as a weakling. In attaching himself to Hitler he encompassed his own and his country's ruin, and sometimes knew that it was so, and yet saw no way of retracting. Whenever he had almost decided to reverse his course some new turn of events would make him change his mind, until at last no retraction was possible, until at last there was no flying hence nor tarrying here.

Looked at in the light of subsequent events Mussolini's vacillation, so intimately and faithfully described by Ciano, seems unaccountable. Why did he not see the consequences of what he was doing, the absurd figure he was cutting? one wonders, as Ciano himself doubtless bitterly wondered, too, in his Verona cell as he looked over the pages of his Diary for the last time. Yet at the time how should Mussolini have known? He also was entangled in events beyond his control which shaped him rather than being shaped by him; he also became eminent only because there existed in his heart a confusion which matched the confusion without. A disintegrating civilisation racing like the Gadarene swine to destruction was personified in him, in his arrogance and cupidity and shifting purposes and vanity and folly. For a little while he led the rush, and then was trampled underfoot, others struggling to the fore to be first over the cliff.

Ciano fell out before Mussolini, and apart from the record of his last bitter thoughts on the evening of December 23, 1943, takes us no farther than the day he left the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 8, 1943, to become Italian Ambassador to the Holy See. Towards the end of August, 1943, he disappeared from Rome. It appears that the Germans tricked him into delivering himself into their hands by telling him that his children were in danger and that they were taking him to Spain. He was held in custody by the Gestapo in Verona for three months and during this time was able to make arrangements for confiding his Diary to his wife. After his execution she somehow smuggled the Diary out of Italy into Switzerland. The story is that she disguised herself as a peasant woman and fastened the bulky manuscript under her skirt, thereby giving the impression of being pregnant. Whether this sub-

terfuge was required or practicable is open to doubt. In Switzerland the Diary was photographed on microfilm and in that form sent to the United States. Its authenticity is beyond question, and has been attested by various persons who knew Ciano's handwriting and were familiar with his highly colloquial literary style. Also, parts of it were read by Ciano to Mr. Sumner Welles and to King Victor Emmanuel. A translation was made for the American edition of the Diary and revised by V. Umberto Coletti-Perucca, LL.D., formerly associated with the *Rivista Illustrata d'Italia* which was suppressed by Mussolini. This translation has been used for the English edition, but again revised and where necessary anglicised. In preparing the notes I have to acknowledge the help of Miss Denise Folliot and of Mrs. Hermione MacColl.

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

Washington, D.C.

## THE ILLUSTRATIONS

(1) COUNT CIANO.

(2) THE MUNICH MEETING.

*Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler, Mussolini, Ciano.*

(3) NOVEMBER, 1938.

*Ciano returns from a visit to Vienna; on his left, his wife Edda.*

(4) MAY, 1939.

*Goering and Ciano at a dinner party given by Hitler in the Chancellery, Berlin.*

(5) THE MEETING AT THE BRENNER PASS.

*Mussolini, Hitler, Ciano.*

(6) OCTOBER 1ST, 1939.

*Ciano and Ribbentrop in the Foreign Office, Berlin.*

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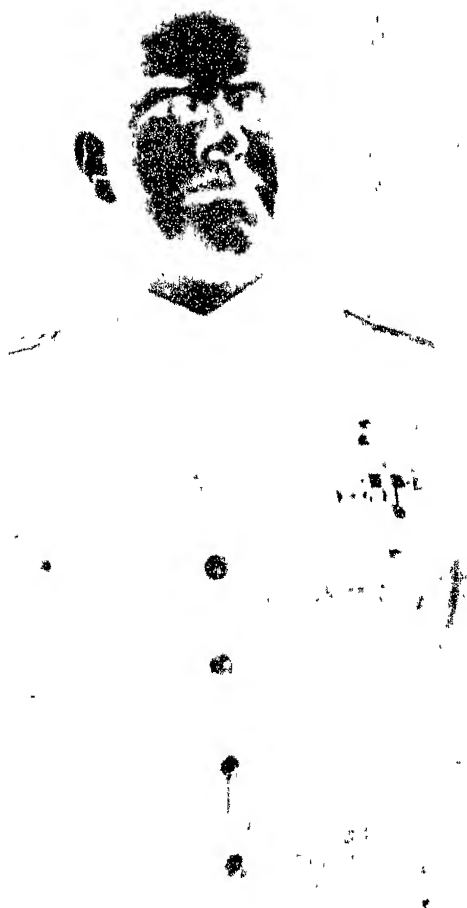
All photographs by courtesy of the *New York Times*.











## SECTION I

January 1, 1939—April 16, 1939

### *THE ATTACK ON ALBANIA*

PLANS for Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany and Japan—American proposals for settling Jews in Abyssinia—Chamberlain visits Rome—Ciano visits Belgrade—First discussions with Stoyadinovich regarding the subjection of Albania—Italian victories in Spain—Conversations with King Boris of Bulgaria—Spanish Pact with Germany—Negotiations with France regarding Tunis—Internal crisis in Yugoslavia—Death of Pope Pius XI—Grandi recalled from London—Adherence of Franco to Anti-Comintern Pact—Ciano visits Poland—Election of Cardinal Pacelli to Papacy—Delay in concluding Tripartite Pact—Coronation of Pope Pius XII—German occupation of Bohemia begins—Mussolini wishes to postpone the Albanian operation—Ciano has conversations with the Vatican—Concentration of Italian forces on the Venetian frontier—Ciano's growing mistrust of Germany—Inauguration of the new Parliament—Chamberlain writes to Mussolini on the international situation—Mussolini refuses any honour from the King—Fall of Madrid—Final preparations for the invasion of Albania—Mussolini visits Calabria—Chamberlain's declaration in the House of Commons on assistance to Poland—Birth of King Zog's son—Invasion of Albania—Ciano flies to Tirana—Reorganization of the Albanian constitution—Crown of Albania offered to the King of Italy.

JANUARY 1, 1939. The Duce returned to Rome last night, and we have had a long conversation. He is very much dissatisfied about the situation in East Africa, and has pronounced severe judgment on the work of the Duke of Aosta.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Asmara is still in a state of complete revolt, and the sixty-five battalions that are stationed there are compelled to live in temporary fortifications. Mazzetti<sup>2</sup> has acted wrongly. He attributes responsibility for the appointment to Teruzzi,<sup>3</sup> who acted on considerations of a personal character, while,

<sup>1</sup> Duke of Aosta: Cousin of King Victor Emmanuel III. Commander-in-Chief, Italian Forces, 1939-41. Died in Kenya in March, 1942, of tuberculosis.

<sup>2</sup> General Mario Mazzetti: Former Member of Italian Parliament.

<sup>3</sup> General Attilio Teruzzi: Under-Secretary of State for Italian Africa. Minister for Italian Africa, 1939. Shot with Mussolini, May, 1945.

when a political appointment is made, it is necessary to be ready to accept the consequences, whatever they may be. The Duce spoke of relations with the Holy See. He sees in the policy of the Catholic Action Movement an attempt to build up a real political party, which, foreseeing a difficult time for Fascism, aims at being ready to become its successor. He defended Starace;<sup>4</sup> whatever he does, he does on the explicit orders of the Duce. He has rejected the suggestion of the Papal Nuncio that something be done about the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Vatican Treaty.<sup>5</sup>

In conclusion, he communicated to me his decision to accept the proposition of von Ribbentrop to transform the anti-Comintern Pact into an alliance. He wants the Pact signed during the last ten days of January. He considers a clash with the Western democracies more and more inevitable, and therefore he wishes to effect a military alignment in advance. During this month he plans to prepare public opinion, of which he is contemptuous, for the acceptance of his views. . . . I am going to write von Ribbentrop a letter in which I shall announce our acceptance of his proposal. This letter will be filed with the official documents.

JANUARY 2, 1939. The letter to von Ribbentrop has been approved. To-morrow I shall deliver it to Attolico<sup>6</sup> with some instructions as to what he should say to the Germans, especially about commercial relations between the two countries,

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<sup>4</sup> Lt.-Gen. Achille Starace: Secretary-General of the Fascist Party, 1928-1939, when he was succeeded by Gen. Ettore Muti. Created Lt.-Gen. during the Abyssinian campaign. Chief of Staff, Fascist Militia, 1939, and replaced by Galbiati in May 1941. Shot with Mussolini.

<sup>5</sup> On February 11, 1929, a Conciliation Treaty, a financial convention and a Concordat were signed at the Lateran Palace by Cardinal Gasparri and Sgr. Mussolini. These officially ended the estrangement between the Vatican and the Quirinal which dated from September 20, 1870, when King Victor Emmanuel II's troops had entered Rome. The Vatican City was by the Treaties recognized as a political state.

In Article 43 of the Concordat it was stated: "The Italian State recognizes the organizations connected with the Azione Cattolica Italiana in so far as these shall (as provided by the Holy See) carry out their activities outside any political party, and under the immediate direction of the hierarchy of the Church, for the diffusion and practice of Catholic principles."

During the pontificate of Pius XI the Fascist authorities demanded the abolition of the Catholic Action organization. It was a lay organization concerned particularly with education and social welfare.

<sup>6</sup> Bernardo Attolico: Italian Ambassador to Berlin. Ambassador to the Vatican, 1940.

and concerning the Alto Adige.<sup>7</sup> It would be well to put into execution Hitler's idea of evacuating those Germans who wish to leave this region. I have telephoned von Ribbentrop to communicate the decision briefly to him. We spoke with some difficulty because of poor connections, and we were not able to say very much to each other; but he was satisfied, and he agreed that by the end of the month everything can be ready, even on the Japanese side.

A conversation with the Duce and Pignatti.<sup>8</sup> The Duce told the Ambassador to tell the Vatican that he is dissatisfied with the policy of the Holy See, especially with reference to the Catholic Action Movement. He also spoke of the opposition of the clergy to the policy of the Axis, as well as to racial legislation. Let them not be under any illusion as to the possibility of keeping Italy under the tutelage of the Church. The power of the clergy is imposing, but more imposing is the power of the State, especially a Fascist State. We do not want a conflict, but we are ready to support the policy of the State, and in such a case we shall arouse all the dormant anti-clerical rancour; let the Pope remember that Italy is Ghibelline.<sup>9</sup> Pignatti spoke in a satisfactory manner. He said that the Vatican has made many mistakes, but that the Pope is a man of good faith, and that, more than any other prelate, he thinks as an Italian. I have given him instructions to act tactfully. With all due respect to Starace, I should like to avoid a clash with the Vatican, which I should consider very harmful.

JANUARY 3, 1939. I have given instructions to Attolico on his mission to von Ribbentrop. He will leave this evening. Whereas, in the past, I have found him rather hostile to the

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<sup>7</sup> The Alto Adige (formerly South Tyrol): Negotiations were under way between Rome and Berlin for the transfer of the German-speaking population of the Province either to Germany or to other provinces of Italy according to their option. The negotiations in fact received no publicity in the Axis countries until the middle of July, 1939. As subsequent entries in Ciano's diary show, they never came to anything.

<sup>8</sup> Count Bonifacio Pignatti Morano di Custoza: Ambassador to Paris, 1932. Ambassador to the Vatican, 1935-9.

<sup>9</sup> Guelph and Ghibelline were originally the names of two German parties formed in the 12th century. The names were employed in Italy, where the Ghibellines formed the party of the Emperor, Frederick I, and the Guelphs the party opposed to him. In the next century the Ghibellines still formed the Imperialist party, but the term Guelph came to be applied to the supporters of the papacy in its struggle against the Empire.

idea of an alliance with Germany, to-day he showed himself openly favourable to it. He said that, during this particular stay in Italy, he has been convinced that nothing would be more popular among us than a war against France. During the afternoon I also informed von Mackensen,<sup>10</sup> who, having just returned from Berlin, came to pay me a visit. The Polish Ambassador told me of Beck's<sup>11</sup> coming visit to Berlin, and of a later visit which von Ribbentrop is to make to Poland. This will make my visit to Warsaw, probably during the last week in February, more feasible.

At the Duce's headquarters with the American Ambassador, bearer of a message from Roosevelt, and some suggestions regarding the settlement of Jews in part of Ethiopia and surrounding colonies. The Duce rejected this proposal, and said that only Russia, the United States and Brazil have the material resources for solving the Jewish question by allotting the Jews a part of their territories. He declared himself favourable to the creation of an independent Jewish State, and in general he promised to support it. In Spain Gambara<sup>12</sup> has resumed the offensive, and, it seems, with some success.

JANUARY 4, 1939. Conversation with Grandi.<sup>13</sup> He is just back from rather a long vacation in Sicily, and therefore has not much to tell me. I gave him a rather vague idea about our future alliance with Germany in order to get his reaction. He has declared himself to be in favour, and does not believe that there will be very serious repercussions in British circles. They still remember the Triple Alliance which for a period of thirty years did not prevent the maintenance of cordial relations between Italy and Great Britain.

In Baghdad there have been demonstrations against our mass immigration to Libya; they think that this nucleus of Italians will break the Arabic preponderance in the Mediterranean.

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<sup>10</sup> F.M. von Mackensen: German Ambassador in Rome.

<sup>11</sup> Col. Joseph Beck: Chef de Cabinet of the War Ministry under Pilsudski, Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, 1932. Signed non-aggression pact with Russia, 1932, and pact with Germany, 1934. Died 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Gen. Gastone Gambara: Italian commander in Spain during the Civil War. He later held various military appointments.

<sup>13</sup> Count Dino Grandi: Italian Ambassador in London, 1932-9. Minister of Justice, 1939-43. Implicated in the overthrow of Mussolini, escaped to Portugal and was condemned to death, in his absence, at the Ciano Trial in January, 1944.

They are right; such is our objective; but the Duce desired me to reassure the Iraq Minister. Since he was annoyed at the publicity that Balbo<sup>14</sup> has acquired through his initiative, he ordered that future immigration should take place secretly. This will help matters.

I have informed von Mackensen about the American proposals of yesterday. He poked fun at them, and made some sharp comments on American lack of political sense.

In Spain we are going ahead at full speed. Gambara has executed a very brilliant manoeuvre. He has freed himself from the threat to his flanks, and in turn has attacked the Reds on their flanks, producing a very serious crisis.

Attolico, after a preliminary conversation with von Ribbentrop, favours the twenty-eighth as the date for the signing of the Alliance.

JANUARY 5, 1939. Good news from Spain. The only danger in sight is a possible large-scale intervention by the French, coming through the Pyrenees. There are already rumours of this. In order to avert such a threat, I have informed London and Berlin that, if the French move, this will be the end of the policy of non-intervention. We, too, will send our regular divisions. This means that we shall make war against France on Spanish territory. I have asked the Germans to publish a note on the diplomatic correspondence in support of our thesis.

The Duce tells me that he has informed the King of the forthcoming military alliance with Germany. He seemed satisfied with it. He does not like the Germans, but he detests and despises the French. However, he considers them capable of a sudden attack against us, and therefore looks with satisfaction upon a German obligation to come to the military aid of Italy.

Besides, times change. The anti-Italian demonstrations in France and Tunis, the gesture of Daladier, who wanted to cut our throats with a Corsican dagger, the press which insults us, all serve to create a hostile attitude to France, especially among

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<sup>14</sup> Marshal of the Air Italo Balbo: One of the quadrumvirs of the March on Rome. Governor-General and C-in-C. Armed Forces, Libya, 1933. Killed in a plane over Tobruk, June, 1940.

the common people. I have told Cianetti<sup>15</sup> to give an ideological flavour to anti-French propaganda among the working classes. France is a bourgeois state, the defender of bourgeois privilege; this creates a tremendous effect. To-day, even Alberto Pirelli,<sup>16</sup> sad-looking, sceptical, perfidious Pirelli, declared his fidelity to the policy of the Axis and his aversion to the Western democracies.

JANUARY 6, 1939. Calm in Spain. Gambara is counting upon mustering his forces in order to resume the attack tomorrow. This evening I spoke with the head of the Spanish economic mission, Señor Annos, who has arrived in Rome for his commercial treaty. He is a very verbose individual, a little frivolous, very vain, but he is a Catalan and therefore knows at least the geography of his own country. He considers the victory of the past few days very important, perhaps decisive for the purpose of cleaning up in Catalonia, and therefore of bringing the war to a decisive end.

The Duce is concerned about the Czech-Hungarian frontier incidents. This time it seems they have reached more serious proportions than usual. I have direct news from the Italian Legation. The Duce wanted to have information from Grandi of Chamberlain's arrival, his state of mind and his intentions. But Grandi has been absent from London for twenty days. He has been having a good time in Sicily and in the mountains. When the Duce heard of this he was very resentful. He said: "He has no vitality left. After the visit I shall have to get rid of him." But I am certain that, as has happened frequently, he will save him at the last moment. After all, he may be right, because Grandi, in spite of his shortcomings, is a good ambassador; it would not be easy to find a better successor, since our diplomatic representatives at this moment are not brilliant.

JANUARY 7, 1939. Attolico has written about his con-

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<sup>15</sup> Tullio Cianetti: Chief of the Workers Federation, Minister of Corporations, 1943; Department of Emigration, 1943; Member of the Fascist Grand Council. Tried in January, 1944, with Ciano and condemned to 30 years' penal servitude.

<sup>16</sup> Alberto Pirelli: Industrialist. Joint Managing Director of the Società Italiana Pirelli and other companies. President of the International Chamber of Commerce, 1928-39. Former Italian Commissioner of the Confederations of Industrial Employers; former Minister of State. Chairman of the Institute for the study of International Politics.

versation with Ribbentrop, who is very enthusiastic about our decision, but Attolico has gone too far in making the Alliance conditional on economic concessions and a settlement of the Alto Adige question. While, as a matter of fact, the first interest us a great deal more because of political repercussions on public opinion, the second must be solved calmly, without useless and excessive publicity. It is sufficient that the Germans, who at this moment need men badly, take any local inhabitants who do not desire to remain in Italian territory south of the Alps. I have telephoned about this to Magistrati.<sup>17</sup>

Prepared a moderate toast for the coming of Chamberlain; I do not believe the situation calls for or will permit the expenditure of too many idle words. I have seen the Japanese Ambassador, who spoke to me about the Alliance; he fears that Arita,<sup>18</sup> the new Foreign Minister, is rather indifferent, while the Prime Minister is openly favourable. This will not have any influence upon the conclusion of the Pact, but might delay the date of signing. Meanwhile, the Ambassador wishes to be received by the Duce in order to get a full understanding of the situation so that he may expedite a reply from his Government. The Ambassador is very favourable to the Alliance, which he considers an aggressive instrument by which to obtain from Great Britain "the many things which she owes to us all".

Von Ribbentrop has sent me the text of the Pact, as well as of the secret military conventions.

Gambara has been wounded, but not seriously. This is fortunate, because he has been magnificent.

JANUARY 8, 1939. Except for a change in the preamble, the Duce approves the texts sent by Ribbentrop. The change was useful. In one paragraph "to meet the threat of Bolshevik dissolution" was mentioned as the aim of the Pact. In reality, where is this threat? And even if such a threat existed, if it is not aimed at our countries, why should we be concerned about it? We should not. Every possibility of dissolution and breakdown of other peoples should be encouraged and assisted by us at the proper moment.

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<sup>17</sup> Count Massimo Magistrati: Secretary at the Italian Embassy in Berlin. Married to Maria, Ciano's sister.

<sup>18</sup> Hachiro Arita: Japanese Foreign Minister, 1938-9 and in 1940.



Señor Annos has brought the Duce a message from Franco, which gives a résumé of the situation and in which imminent victory is also confirmed. The Duce was very appreciative of the message, and also praised it for the manner in which it was conveyed, defining it as "the report of a subordinate".

With the Duce we then examined at length the action to be taken: closer relations with Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania, and possibly Poland, for the purpose of ensuring raw materials. Alliance with Spain as soon as the war is won. Settling accounts with France. No Nice, no Savoy, for they are beyond the Alps. Corsica: autonomy, independence, annexation. Tunisia: minority settlement for the Italians, the Bey's autonomy, Italian protectorate. Jibuti: free port and railway, joint administration with France, annexation. Suez Canal: strong participation in the administration. Albania: liquidation by agreement with Belgrade, eventually favouring Serbian settlement in Salonika.

JANUARY 9, 1939. I have secretly informed Starace about the Treaty of Alliance. He was enthusiastic about it, and said that for some time he had hoped for some such solution. It is true: even in the moments of crisis for the Axis, as, for instance, after the Anschluss, Starace was among the few who openly favoured our understanding with Germany. I gave him these instructions: to keep quiet until Chamberlain, to whom must be accorded a not too enthusiastic welcome, leaves Rome; then, afterwards, steadily increasing propaganda against France, so that the alliance may take place when anti-French feeling is at its height; at the news of the signing of the Pact there must be demonstrations with a sharply Francophobe flavour. Starace says that not much work is needed for all this, since the change has already occurred, and thus it is easy to create national feeling against France.

The Duce has answered with a cordial letter to Franco, urging him to proceed with caution until the war is virtually ended, without accepting compromises or mediations of any kind. Also as regards the restoration of the monarchy, the Duce suggested that Franco should go slow. He prefers a united and pacified Spain under the guidance of the Caudillo, head of the country and of the Party. It will be easy for Franco to govern

if he first achieves full military success. The prestige of a leader victorious in war is never questioned.

JANUARY 10, 1939. From the information we now have, it is clear that not all responsibility for the frontier clashes between the Hungarians and the Czechs rests with Prague. On the contrary. The Hungarian attitude is unsatisfactory. From the beginning they tried to sabotage the Vienna arbitration. This is stupid politics, since it irritates both us and Germany, and certainly cannot modify the situation. I spoke clearly to Villani.<sup>19</sup> I told him to urge his Government to take a correct line and to abstain from provoking incidents for which I would assume no responsibility, either for us or for the Germans. The Duce is also very resentful, especially since the French press might exploit the situation in order to discredit the influence and action of the Axis in Central Europe. He said: "These Hungarians begin to fall in my esteem. They didn't have the courage to act when they could have acted, and now they carry on like Jesuits. . . ."

Things are going well in Spain; the offensive is proceeding at a rapid and regular pace.

JANUARY 11, 1939. Arrival of Chamberlain. Essentially the visit was kept in a minor key, since both the Duce and myself are doubtful about its utility. The welcome of the crowd was good, particularly in the middle-class section of the city, where the old man with the umbrella is very popular. The welcome was colder on the outskirts, where the workers are less emotional. Chamberlain, however, is very happy over the reception. He undoubtedly still remembers the boos with which he was received some months ago in friendly France. . . .

6 p.m.: Conference at the Palazzo Venezia. The recorded conversations gave an impression of tiredness. The matters which were discussed were not particularly important, and both parties betrayed their mental reservations. To-day's conversation has been exploratory. Effective contact has not been made. How far apart we are from these people! It is another world. We were talking about it after dinner with the Duce, gathered together in a corner of the room. "These men

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<sup>19</sup> Baron Frederick Villani; Hungarian Minister in Rome.

are not made of the same stuff," he was saying, "as the Francis Drakes and the other magnificent adventurers who created the empire. These, after all, are the tired sons of a long line of rich men, and they will lose their empire." Then, speaking of France, the Duce was quite offended by an article in *Europe Nouvelle* which made unpleasant remarks about his private life. He said: "These will be the first to fall. Certain offences are punished with cannon and bombs."

JANUARY 12, 1939. Conference at the Palazzo Chigi with Lord Halifax. A tête-à-tête is preferable to discussion in public. He talks of politics with a certain impersonal interest. The conversation turned especially to Spain. I repeated to him our point of view and he gave his. But he does not seem to be very convinced, and at heart I think he would be glad if Franco's victory were to settle the question.

I shall let von Mackensen read yesterday's record. The recorded discussion of the afternoon was characterized by the profound uneasiness which dominates the British attitude to Germany. German rearmament weighs on them like lead. They would be ready for any sacrifice if they could see the future clearly. This sombre preoccupation of theirs has convinced me more and more of the necessity for the Triple Alliance. Having in our hands such an instrument we could get whatever we want. The British do not want to fight. They try to draw back as slowly as possible, but they do not want to fight. Mussolini defended Germany with strong loyalty, and he was also a bit secretive regarding his future projects and those of the Führer. Our conversations with the British have ended. Nothing was accomplished. I have telephoned von Ribbentrop that the visit was a fiasco ("big lemonade"), absolutely innocuous, and I thanked him for the attitude of the German press.

JANUARY 13, 1939. During the morning and the afternoon no contact with the British, who have gone to the Vatican. The atmosphere is now one of vague scepticism. English newspapers defined the meeting as a game ending in naught all. The definition is good. I prepared a perfectly innocuous press release which I showed to the Duce at the Palazzo Venezia late this evening when he returned from Terminillo, where he had gone ski-ing. He approved it. Dinner at Lord

Perth's.<sup>20</sup> Afterwards, a short conversation between the Duce, Chamberlain, and me. We spoke of the Jewish question, and it was interesting to note that Chamberlain did not know the number of Jews in Great Britain. He thought there were probably 60,000. The Duce said that they were in excess of 200,000. Chamberlain is very much concerned with the problem and he said that any further Jewish immigration to England might increase the anti-Semitism which already exists in many parts of the country. During the meeting François-Poncet<sup>21</sup> tried to get close to the Duce, who ostentatiously turned his back on him. The French Ambassador makes no progress at all; the Duce hates him. It has been learned from the Uruguayan Minister that Poncet has said that the Duce has begun to show signs of mental decay. An intercepted letter from him said: "In Germany I had to deal with real gentlemen; here, instead, I have to deal with servants who have become masters." These are the rocks on which the Poncet mission was shipwrecked. He has been thrown off his balance by the coolness of our reception, and so he now piles mistake on mistake.

I have sent Hitler copies of the two reports of the meetings at the Palazzo Venezia.

JANUARY 14, 1939. I accompanied the Duce to the station on Chamberlain's departure. He is furious about the British press in general, but especially with the Daily Express for an article by Lord Forbes, full of idiotic commonplaces, concerning the hostility of the Italian people to Axis politics.

The leave-taking was brief but cordial. Chamberlain kept repeating his thanks for the treatment that was accorded him during his stay in Italy.

Chamberlain's eyes filled with tears when the train started moving and his countrymen began singing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow". "What is this little song?" the Duce asked Grandi. Old Chamberlain is a pleasant fellow, and quite apart

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<sup>20</sup> Lord Perth: Formerly Sir Eric Drummond. Secretary-General to the League of Nations, 1919-33. Ambassador to Italy, 1933-9.

<sup>21</sup> André François-Poncet: Under-Secretary of State to Prime Minister's office in the Laval cabinet of 1931. Ambassador to Germany, 1931-8 and to Italy, 1938-40. Member of the National Council, 1941. Controller-General of Press, 1942. Arrested by the Gestapo, 1943. Liberated by the Allies, May, 1945, and now living quietly.

from any other consideration I can understand the cordial atmosphere which has grown up around him.

Mussolini indirectly inspired a violent editorial in *Il Tevere* entitled "Spitting on France". To-morrow I shall propose to him that wide publicity be given to a lengthy speech made by Campinelli<sup>22</sup> in a hotel in Bastia, reported to me by two of our Corsican secret agents, Giuredi and Pietri. The speech threatens war against Italy in June and reveals exact plans of aggression by France. The report is absolutely authentic. I think that if properly used by the press, this report may well create a tremendous sensation, and, at any rate, will increase the wave of hatred against the French, which in Italy is already impressive.

JANUARY 15, 1939. News of the troop advances in Catalonia is more and more encouraging. General Gambara has luckily assumed the role of leader of all Spanish forces. Rumours are beginning to circulate about intervention by the French in force. I do not believe them. For the French to intervene now, in the present state of the war, they would have to send substantial forces or else risk being defeated by the Catalans. They are in no position to do this; they would have to mobilize on a large scale. Moreover, a country which in the second half of the year just past has had 40,000 more deaths than births cannot permit itself the luxury of wasting the blood of its limited population. If the French intervene, so shall we. Mussolini said this morning: "If Paris sends forces we shall unload thirty battalions at Valencia, even if this should provoke a world war."

I discussed with the Duce what I must say and do in Yugoslavia. The Albanian question was the principal point of the discussion. We agreed that it would not pay to gamble with our precious friendly relations with Belgrade to win Albania. Therefore, as things stand, we shall take action only if we can arrive at an agreement on the following basis: adjustment of the Yugoslav frontiers, demilitarization of the Albanian frontiers, military alliance, and absolute support of the Serbs for their conquest of Salonika.

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<sup>22</sup> Campinelli: Popular Corsican leader, anti-Italian.

JANUARY 16, 1939. The advance in Catalonia is proceeding faster. Reus and Tarragona fell yesterday; to-day, it appears, Cervera as well. At this pace the situation in Barcelona will also become untenable. The Duce is convinced of this: he says that an exhausted army becomes paralysed when it is running. Victory now seems certain. For this reason we will not permit the French to intervene. This morning I saw Lord Perth and spoke to him as follows: "I warn you that if the French intervene in force in favour of the Reds in Barcelona, we shall attack Valencia. Thirty battalions, fully equipped, are ready to be embarked at the first sign. We shall do this even if it should provoke a European war. Thus I ask you to urge the French to be moderate and to preserve a due sense of the responsibility that the situation demands."

I do not believe that France will act, even though the taking of Barcelona will precipitate a crisis, whose import cannot be clearly appreciated to-day.

Conference with Sereggi,<sup>23</sup> bearer of a letter from King Zog, who asks for mediation with the Yugoslavs regarding the treatment of the Albanian minorities living in Kossovo; if everything goes well, and if Stoyadinovich<sup>24</sup> is able to proceed with determination, I shall certainly give Zog the mediation he asks for!

JANUARY 17, 1939. The advance continues well. Many rumours of French intervention and a great deal of agitation among the extreme political parties, but nothing serious; at least for the time being.

The German Ambassador, acting for von Ribbentrop, asked me to sound out Belgrade in order to ascertain whether Stoyadinovich intends to give his approval to the Anti-Comintern Pact. I shall try; but to my mind this is premature. There is no doubt about Stoyadinovich's solidarity with the Axis. Personally, he would like to go even further. But I wonder if the present internal situation will allow him to make decisions of such a nature, and I am inclined to think not.

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<sup>23</sup> Gen. Zeff Sereggi: Albanian Minister in Rome.

<sup>24</sup> Dr. Milan Stoyadinovich: Yugoslav Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1935-8. President of the Yugoslav Radical Union, 1935-9. Founded the Serb-Radical Party, 1940. Interned, 1940-1. Handed over to the British authorities in March, 1941, and interned at Mauritius.

Dentice di Frasso has given us information about an astonishing American invention of a very powerful smokeless, colourless, and flashless gunpowder. Dentice vouches for this claim but I am sceptical about such inventions. However, I am inclined to arrange for one of our specialists to take a trip to the United States in order to meet the inventor and look into the matter. It is always worth trying. Who knows?

A long conversation with Lord Lloyd, to whom I repeated briefly and with some reserve what I had said to Halifax about France.

JANUARY 18, 1939. Departure for Belje. Normal journey; cordial demonstrations at Trieste and Postumia.

JANUARY 19, 1939. Arrival at Belje. Hare hunt. I returned by train, and Stoyadinovich and I had a conversation. I touched on the Albanian question. At first Stoyadinovich seemed perturbed. Then he broke the ice, and spoke of the partition of Albania as the best way out.

JANUARY 20, 1939. Went hunting in the forest. Good news from Spain. Stoyadinovich received it, shouting: "Corsica, Tunis, Nice!"

JANUARY 21, 1939. Last hunt at Belje. Departure for Belgrade in the evening. Stoyadinovich requested me to speak at length with the Regent and to inform him thoroughly of the international political situation. He is anxious about his relations with the monarchy, which do not seem good.

JANUARY 22, 1939. Belgrade. A hunt and a long conversation with the Regent. I am particularly moved by the spontaneity of the welcome accorded me, which was very different from my last visit here. I made a report on my reception to be filed in Rome.

JANUARY 23, 1939. Returned to Rome. Many demonstrations at the stations on the way.

JANUARY 24, 1939. This morning I went to Villa Torlonia, where I informed the Duce about my trip and its results. He was very well satisfied. He was particularly interested in hearing that in Yugoslavia I found such widespread anti-German feeling. He was also delighted so far as Albania is concerned. He informed me about what had happened during my absence. Nothing very important, except the news that the

first execution of a woman had taken place. There had been a great deal of opposition to executing a woman because popular expressions of disapproval were anticipated. The Duce, on the other hand, approved of it because he was convinced of the approval of the masses. And in fact, while the execution of a man was accepted in silence, this one was greeted with applause. The woman had murdered her own child. The crime took place in Terni.

I saw Lord Perth. I had previously communicated with him, before my departure, about French intervention in Spain. It caused alarm in London. They ask that we should do nothing before consulting the British Government. In principle I reassured Lord Perth.

Excellent news from Spain. Troops are taking up positions in the suburbs of Barcelona, so they may occupy the city at any moment.

We ask that our Legionaries may be among the first units to enter. They deserve it.

JANUARY 25, 1939. Conversation with Villani. I informed him about what I had done in Belgrade, particularly regarding Hungary. I recommended moderation regarding Rumania. I do not understand how a country like Hungary, preoccupied with the German danger, can fail to see the danger of aggravating the crisis with Rumania, already the focus of dangerous ambitions in Berlin. What would the Magyar position be on the day that the Germans reached the frontiers of Transylvania?

The Duce is very anxious to have word of the occupation of Barcelona. He telephones me often, because he fears a repetition of what took place in Madrid; I am quite confident.

I informed von Mackensen of the outcome of my visit to Belgrade, and received Lord Perth, who came to ask us to warn Franco not to indulge in acts of vengeance against his enemies after victory. I reassured him, and told him that we have always tried to act as moderators. I recall that after the taking of Bilbao the Duce sent a letter which, when it is made known, will redound to the honour of its author.

Our volunteers are overcoming the final resistance of the



Lister Division. Barcelona is now within their reach. They have had the hardest task, and are anxious to get there.

JANUARY 26, 1939. Long conversation with the King of Bulgaria. I had not met him before. My first impression was not good, because of his physical appearance. My later impression was better. We spoke at length about the international situation, with particular reference to the Danubian basin and the Balkans. He asked for news about my visit to Yugoslavia, and he spoke about his agreement with this country with such feeling that I had the impression he was sincere. He was very bitter against Rumania, but his violence was like himself, lymphatic. He wants the province of Dobruja,<sup>25</sup> and he wants it particularly because there is great irredentist agitation. He spoke also of an outlet on the Ægean Sea, but added that this must be considered as the second step in the settlement of Bulgarian claims.

While I was at the golf club the news arrived that Barcelona had fallen. I notified the Duce at Terminillo and reached agreement with Starace about the celebration of the event all over Italy. All that was necessary was to fix the time; no stimulation is needed since the Italian population are spontaneously enthusiastic about the news.

The Duce, too, was deeply moved, despite the fact that he always likes to appear imperturbably calm.

But he has good reason to be really satisfied, because victory in Spain bears only one name, and that is the name of Mussolini, who conducted the campaign bravely, firmly, even at a time when many people who now applaud him were against him.

JANUARY 27, 1939. The Duce has summoned the Greek Minister. From a report coming from Bucharest it appeared that the Greek military attaché had made insulting remarks about our Army in a conversation with a Hungarian colleague. The poor Greek Minister trembled like a leaf when Mussolini, with a face as hard as metal, told him that if, within three days, full satisfaction was not given us, there would be serious complications. It is his intention to hand his passport

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<sup>25</sup> Dobruja: A province transferred from Bulgaria to Rumania after the 1914-18 war. Mixed population including Rumanians, Bulgars, Tartars.

to the Greek Minister, who, during this stormy scene, had nothing to say except to congratulate us on the capture of Barcelona.

Lord Perth has submitted for our approval the outline of the speech which Chamberlain will make before the House of Commons, in order that we may suggest changes, if necessary. The Duce approved it and commented: "I believe this is the first time that the head of the British Government has submitted to a foreign government the outline of one of his speeches. It's a bad sign for them."

At my suggestion Gambara has been promoted in the field to the post of Divisional Commander. He has deserved it, both because of his ability and because of the blood he has shed.

The Spaniards are preparing to conclude a political pact with Germany, of which the Germans have communicated the text to us. If it is to be secret, like ours, there will be no opposition. But if it is to be made public I consider it imperative that we should be the first to release the news. Otherwise people will say that Italy makes war in Spain and Germany profits from it.

JANUARY 28, 1939. Fagioli gave me an account of a conversation he had in France with Baudouin,<sup>20</sup> administrator of the salt mines in Somaliland, who stated that he had been secretly charged by Daladier to start conversations with us. François-Poncet must not be informed about it, because in Paris he is no longer considered an authority on the Italian situation. It seems that Daladier is ready to make concessions in these three fields: Jibuti, the Suez Canal, and the statutes regarding the Italians in Tunisia. I informed the Duce, although he also is very sceptical about these clandestine ambassadors. He suggested, however, that Baudouin should come to Rome.

Long conference with Silimbani, Consul-General in Tunis. The French authorities are exerting a great deal of pressure, and using every means in their power, to make the Italians become French nationals. They are preparing a coup d'état:

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<sup>20</sup> Paul Baudouin: French banker and politician. Former General Manager of the Bank of Indo-China. Secretary, French War Cabinet and Ministerial Economic Committee, 1940. Assistant at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1940. Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Petain Government June-October, 1940, and later Minister of State and member of the Council of Ministers. Arrested by the French, May, 1946.

simultaneous publication of a great number of applications for naturalization, which will be the proof that the Italians do not care about their national aspirations. In order to ward off the blow and oppose the manœuvre, we will organize a collective return to Italy of one thousand Italians who wish to escape the French pressure upon them to become naturalized. We will create Tunisian refugees, just as there have been Austrian and Sudeten émigrés and refugees.

JANUARY 29, 1939. Nothing interesting except good news from Gambara about a further advance towards the Pyrenees.

We have bombed and destroyed twenty-four batteries and an aeroplane which was about to take off. Gambara asks that food should be sent, because the population is literally starving. They share the mess with the Legionaries, shouting simultaneously: "Long live Franco! Long live Italy!"

JANUARY 30, 1939. The Greek Minister brought the answer from his Government; it is an act of abject submission made in terms which do not leave any doubt as to the Greeks' fear of us. A guilty conscience weighs upon them, and recent experiences have proved that small countries can only count on the friendship or the enmity of their geographical neighbours.

We sent provisions to Barcelona. The Duce has a terrible cold: he is very much concerned about the preparation of the militia for the parade of February 1st. He concerns himself personally with the most minute details. He spends many a half-hour at his office window, concealed behind the blue curtains, watching the movements of the various units. It was his order that the drums and trumpets should be used at the same time. It was he who chose the band-leader's baton, and in person he teaches the movements to be made, and changes the proportions and design of the baton. He believes strongly that a smart soldier is a good soldier. He says that 1,400,000,000 men were required in order to defeat 60,000,000 Germans; the reason being that the rigid Prussian military training has made Prussian soldiers invincible. Very often he accuses the King of having diminished the physical prestige of our Army in order to harmonize it with his own "unhappy physique".

JANUARY 31, 1939. The Führer's speech has produced a most favourable impression everywhere. Even the Duce was very well satisfied with it, and he instructed me to telephone to von Ribbentrop so that he might tell Hitler that the words uttered last night have given a great deal of joy and satisfaction to all the Italian people.<sup>27</sup> In fact to-day the Duce and I observed the crowd in the Piazza Venezia applauding some S.A. officers warmly. The Axis is becoming popular. The Germans are working to this end, and so are the French with their politics based upon coarse insults and ill-concealed spite.

Conference with King Boris. Ostensibly it was to confer a decoration upon me, but in reality it was to protest politely against the exuberant activity of some members of the Italian Legation, Talamo<sup>28</sup> included, who have created a difficult and uncomfortable situation. I shall intervene.

The Turkish Ambassador renewed the invitation of his Government that I should go to Ankara. I replied that I had not gone previously because I had become aware that the Turks themselves preferred that the visit should be postponed. I had read it in a decoded telegram. He became as red as a lantern, and said: "This delay was because of the health of Atatürk." However, I was non-committal about the invitation.

Grandi telephoned that Chamberlain's speech in the House of Commons to-day with reference to his visit to Italy has been very well received.

FEBRUARY 1, 1939. Review of the militia. Altogether it was very beautiful. The units are really ready. Masses of men and steel. The march past, however, was monotonous. Nobody is more in favour of the Roman step<sup>29</sup> than I am. It imposes a form, but still creates an impression of vitality. But abolishing the bands during the march past creates a sense of heavy monotony, even if this hammering of steps on the pavement in itself gives an impression of strength. The Germans

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<sup>27</sup> Hitler declared that if Italy became involved in war, Germany would be found at her side. He also said that Germany and Italy gave each other mutual support as claimants for a fairer share of the world's material resources.

<sup>28</sup> Marchese Giuseppe Talamo Stenolfi di Castelnuovo: Italian Minister to Bulgaria.

<sup>29</sup> Passo Romano: An Italian version of the German goose-step introduced by Mussolini as part of his totally unsuccessful efforts to make the Italians a warlike people.

make a fusion of marching, music and drums with excellent effect. We ought to do the same; there is no reason why we should not profit from their experience in view of the undeniable fact that this particular march is a genuine imitation of their goose-step. Casini proposes to start a political daily in Rome, which nowadays has not got one. I agree that it must not be owned by industrialists. What need do they have for it? If a daily newspaper must be started, the Fascist party must logically be the owner. Afterwards I was visited by Pignatti, and by the Nuncio. The atmosphere for the celebration of the tenth anniversary is becoming murky; the Duce has no intention of answering the Pope's letter, nor of granting the changes in the law concerning mixed marriages.<sup>30</sup> I have charged Pignatti to look into the matter at the Vatican because we must, at all costs, make sure that the Pope makes no pointed references to it when he speaks to the bishops if we are to accept invitations to St. Peter's.

Muti<sup>31</sup> came back. Things are going extremely well in Spain. He asked for reinforcements and arms for the final blow at Valencia and Madrid. We decided to give both.

FEBRUARY 2, 1939. A short meeting with von Mackensen. He says that the German Government has in no way dissuaded Budapest from coming to an accord with Bucharest. They agree with us that no opportunity should be missed to do everything in our power to bring Rumania into line with our policy. I thanked von Mackensen for the Führer's speech and told him that we are preparing to make a solemn manifestation of our approval. In fact, by order of the Duce I have prepared the agenda for the meeting of the Grand Council in honour of Hitler.

I received M. Baudouin. He strikes me as being a quiet and well-mannered person. He tells me that he had a con-

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<sup>30</sup> In 1938 the Fascist regime adopted an anti-Semitic policy. The Pope contested the right of the Fascist State to forbid the marriage of Jews and so-called Aryan Italians as being contrary to Catholic doctrine and also against the Concordat, which specified that marriages celebrated by a priest should be recognized by the civil authorities.

<sup>31</sup> General Ettore Muti: Inspector of Fascists abroad, 1938-9. Secretary of the Fascist Party from November, 1939, in succession to Starace. Replaced within a year by Serena and became a bomber pilot. He organized the preliminary bombing of Greece. His death in August, 1943, was reported, at the hands of Badoglio's followers.

versation with Daladier and Bonnet<sup>32</sup> on Sunday and that he speaks for them. Naturally, there is no question of committing either Paris or Rome; his visit can be denied at any moment if we so choose. In conclusion, Daladier does not intend to make any open territorial concession; if we asked for territories there would be war. However, he is ready to make the following concessions: a large free zone in Jibuti; a share in the administration of the port; cession to Italy of the railway in Ethiopian territory; support of our demands with regard to Suez; revision of the agreements of 1935 concerning Tunis, provided Tunisia is not made into an "Italian Sudetenland". I made it clear that with regard to Tunis we ask but one thing: the right of the Italians to remain Italians. I reserved the right to give him a final answer only after having spoken to the Duce.

FEBRUARY 3, 1939. I reported to the Duce the conversation with M. Baudouin. He agreed that the proposals are interesting. As things stand, there are only two alternatives: either to make a deal on this basis, postponing the final solution of the whole problem to a more favourable date, or to force the full issue now; the latter alternative would mean war. The Duce has prepared a report to the Grand Council, which he read to me. He is in favour of diplomatic negotiations; therefore, he authorized me to answer M. Baudouin that we consider the proposals worthy of consideration. He prefers that the negotiations be carried on through the Ambassador. "If we reach a solution through the mediation of a banker, an atmosphere of suspicion will inevitably be created." He ordered me, moreover, to keep von Mackensen secretly informed of everything.

Conversation with M. Baudouin. He was moved when I told him that it was through his action that the contact was made, and he understands that it is not his task to handle the subsequent negotiations. We agreed that he will report to Paris

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<sup>32</sup> Georges Bonnet: Radical Socialist. French Foreign Minister, April, 1938—September, 1939. Attacked by opposition newspapers in February, 1939, for negotiating with Berlin and Rome over the heads of his Ambassadors. Became Minister of Justice in September, 1939, when the Foreign Ministry was taken over by Daladier. Attempted to prevent the Allied declaration of war and was dropped from the Government in April, 1940. Included in Petain's Government. Principal witness for the prosecution in the Riom trials. Fled from France, July, 1944, and now resident in Switzerland.

and that the French Government will instruct François-Poncet to repeat to me officially all that M. Baudouin told me yesterday, unless something new develops. If there are unforeseen details to be discussed, he will write to me through Fagioli. I recommended also the most thorough discussion, for if the press gets hold of these plans for an understanding there will be an explosion.

FEBRUARY 4, 1939. While I was playing golf I received Gambara's telegram announcing the occupation of Gerona by the Littorio Division. Catalonia is now completely occupied, and there remains only the final blow at the centre.

To that end we shall immediately begin to reorganize our forces in Spain, which must again assume the task of carrying the Spanish along.

I informed von Mackensen of my conversation with Baudouin; so far as I could judge he received the news of our possible diplomatic settlement of the dispute with France with pleasure.

Lord Perth is concerned about our sending fresh troops to Libya. I gave a soothing answer, but I definitely reassured him on two points: that nothing will be done in the direction of the eastern border, and that the visits of Lutze<sup>33</sup> and of General Udet to Libya have no military significance. Stoyadinovich has offered his resignation. Is this a manoeuvre or a genuine fall? We shall see. In any case it disturbs me.

Meeting of the Grand Council. The Duce read his report (a copy of which will go in the volume of his writings), and said that it represents a password to future generations. It is the first time he has prepared a document for the Grand Council and he wishes it to be included in the record under the title, "The March to the Sea". I, too, made my report, and it was greeted with hearty applause.

FEBRUARY 5, 1939. The Duce explained in detail what has been done for Libya: 30,000 men are there now, and 30,000 more will be sent there. In order to understand why this must be done, one need only compare our forces with those of the French in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco.

For the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Vatican

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<sup>33</sup> Viktor Lutze: Chief of S.A. since the death of Roehm in 1934. Killed in a car accident in Potsdam in May, 1943.

Treaty in St. Peter's I have been delegated to represent the Government. Prince Umberto will represent the Royal House. The Duce had meant to send less conspicuous personages, but Pignatti asked him not to do this in order to avoid giving offence to the Pope, who is already exasperated.

No definite news about the Yugoslav crisis. The Duce said that this is another proof that we can do business with one country alone, that is, with Germany, which, like ourselves, is not changeable in its directives and in the obligations it assumes. Stoyadinovich's position seemed to be secure; he himself asserted a fortnight ago that nothing and no one could get him out of power. Now, things are different. Now, the crisis interests me, not so much because of our relations with Belgrade, which will not change very much in the immediate future, but rather with regard to Albania, about which we had almost reached an agreement. Anyway, the following formula was agreed upon with the Duce: if the Stoyadinovich policy still holds, to go ahead with the partition of Albania between us and Yugoslavia; if not, then occupation of Albania by us without Yugoslavia, and, if necessary, even against Yugoslavia.

FEBRUARY 6, 1939. Ribbentrop telephoned me to tell me that a Frenchman, de Brinon,<sup>34</sup> has been to see him and mentioned the possibility of diplomatic agreements between Rome and Paris. He seems also to be informed about Baudouin's trip. I got the impression that Ribbentrop wanted us to proceed with the negotiations. I told him that we are taking no initiative, but in any case this shows that the secret mission of Baudouin is now known. It is becoming more and more difficult to work with these democracies. Ribbentrop also spoke with optimism of the Tripartite Alliance with Japan, and of the Yugoslav crisis; he believes that the new Foreign Minister is pro-Axis.

At the Nunciature I saw Poncet. He made some mention of the futility of his stay in Rome, but I let the subject drop, and spoke instead of sport and art. The Japanese Ambassador is sceptical about the possibility of a quick realization of the Triple Alliance; he believes that the Japanese counter-proposal is an

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<sup>34</sup> Count Fernand de Brinon: French publicist. Vice-President of the French-German Committee. Vichy envoy in Paris, 1940. Imprisoned May, 1945.



expedient to delay matters which he himself advises us not to accept.

I saw the Duce at the Palazzo Venezia. He believes that the dismissal of Stoyadinovich is a veritable coup d'état on the part of the Regent, who wanted to prevent the strengthening of the Fascist dictatorship in Yugoslavia. I gave the Duce my point of view on Albania: we must work faster. He agreed with me. We shall begin immediately to mobilize land forces and to concentrate air forces. We shall intensify local revolutionary preparations. The date of the action: Easter week.

FEBRUARY 7, 1939. The Duce is right. Stoyadinovich informed Indelli<sup>35</sup> that the Regent was aware of what was going on, and was, perhaps, himself at the bottom of the plot against him. However, Stoyadinovich has no intention of giving up. He has not yet decided how to proceed, but is determined to take revenge, and popular feeling is more and more openly with him. However, I wonder whether he will act, and, if so, to what effect? His position was gaining in strength, but was not yet strong enough to permit him to face the coalition which, encouraged by the Regent, was growing against him.

During the evening I saw the Duce, and we spoke at length about the situation. I repeated my views on the necessity for acting more quickly in Albania for the following reasons: (1) the Yugoslavs now know that we are considering the question, and the rumour may spread; (2) with the removal of Stoyadinovich the Yugoslav card has lost for us 90 per cent of its value; (3) since the enterprise will no longer be undertaken in conjunction with Yugoslavia, but without her, and perhaps even against her, we must not give her time to strengthen her political, diplomatic and military contacts with France and with Great Britain. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the Duce agreed that the date for the attack should be between April 1st and 9th. In the meantime, I will see Ribbentrop, and perhaps give him an account of the matter.

FEBRUARY 8, 1939. The Duce is not satisfied with the Japanese delays concerning the Tripartite Alliance, and he deplores the light way in which Ribbentrop assured us that the

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<sup>35</sup> Mario Indelli: Italian Minister to Yugoslavia from 1936. Later Ambassador to Tokyo.

Japanese Government agreed. He is of the opinion that an alliance between Germany and Italy should be concluded without Japan. He observes that such an alliance would in itself be sufficient to counterbalance existing Anglo-French forces, and at the same time would not appear to be anti-British or anti-American.

We sent a telegram to Berlin, urging them to reach a conclusion quickly on the agreement with Spain in order to counteract the rapprochement between Burgos and Paris. We shall then make it known that we have had an agreement with Spain since November, 1936.

I received de Man,<sup>36</sup> who had been entrusted by the King of the Belgians with a mission to organize a four-power conference. I told him that it seems to me that the necessary conditions for the realization of such a project do not exist. De Man expressed his point of view in a trivial way; what interested me most about him was a slight tan which he had acquired somewhere in the mountains. Jacomoni<sup>37</sup> arrived, and confirmed that this was the time to act quickly. The atmosphere is tense in Albania; unquestionably all the chiefs are with us. But how long can the secret be kept? We studied the details of the operation at length.

FEBRUARY 9, 1939. The Royal Signature.<sup>38</sup> Among other things the King told me that yesterday two persons had reported to him that at the last meeting of the Grand Council the Duce had deplored the meeting of November 30.<sup>39</sup> I reported this to the Duce: still another proof that the Grand Council is not a completely reliable organ of the Government. We must change its composition and reduce to a minimum the number of its members.

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<sup>36</sup> Dr. Henry de Man, President of the Belgian Socialist Party and Cabinet Minister.

<sup>37</sup> Gen. Francesco Jacomoni di Sanlavino: Italian Minister to Albania. Appointed Lieutenant-General of Albania in 1939. Sentenced by the Rome High Court in March, 1945.

<sup>38</sup> The Royal Signature was a periodical audience at which members of the Cabinet submitted documents for the King's signature.

<sup>39</sup> November 30, 1938. At a meeting of the Fascist Chamber Ciano made a speech on foreign affairs, giving a review of events since Munich. The principal interest lay in his revelations of Italy's political and military action during the crisis. Italy had assured Germany that if the conflict spread, she would march with Germany. Partial mobilization took place, and Ciano stressed the fact that Italy was ready for action. The speech was greeted with applause and cries of "Tunisia!"

I proposed to the Duce, who approved, that to-morrow evening in the Grand Council we should vote on the agenda for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Vatican Treaty. Our relations with the Church have in these last few days been greatly clarified. I did my best to bring this about. In the evening news arrived that the Pope's condition had become worse. His death would be rather upsetting at this time. Our attempts to influence the Conclave would then have to be made in an atmosphere of prejudice inimical to our purposes. We might have to anticipate disagreeable surprises. During the meeting of the Supreme Defence Council I showed the Duce the typewritten record of Pignatti's telephone call concerning the Pope's heart attack, and he only shrugged his shoulders with open indifference. Strange. For some time now Mussolini has shown an increasingly obvious indifference to anything related to the Church. Once it was not so.

FEBRUARY 10, 1939. The Pope is dead. The news leaves the Duce completely indifferent. During my personal report to him he mentioned the death only in order to inform me that this evening he will postpone the meeting of the Grand Council to pay respect to the memory of the Pope, and that the public will now be too much preoccupied with mourning to bother about scholastic reform<sup>40</sup> and religious education.

Great resentment over Germany's intention to lay hands on the Albanian oil. The evidence comes from an official communication received by Attolico. I telephoned Mackensen and informed him that we considered Albania as just like any other Italian province, and that any German intervention would create strong resentment in Italian public opinion. This fact also proves that the Albanian boil will come to a head in a short time. The Serbians have spoken. King Zog is alarmed and very much agitated. Some move might yet be made to oppose our action.

I went to the Holy See to offer the respects of the Government at the bier of the Pope, and was received by the Dean

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<sup>40</sup> In September, 1931, Mussolini had given the Church the right to have priests in the schools. In spite of this the question of education was one of the major causes of friction between Church and State. Religious education was to have been on the agenda of this meeting.

of the Cardinals and by Pacelli,<sup>41</sup> who to-day, pending the election of a new Pope, is in charge of the Holy Roman Church. I conveyed the sympathy of the Italian Government and of the Fascist people, and I said that the former Pope had enshrined his name in history for all eternity through the Lateran Treaty. They liked my expressions very much. Pacelli took me to the Sistine Chapel, where the Pontiff rested on a high catafalque, and he spoke to me in a very agreeable and hopeful tone about relations between State and Church. Of the Pope himself we could see nothing—only his enormous white sandals and the hem of his robe; but the atmosphere was one of infinity.

FEBRUARY 11, 1939. The Grand Council approved the agenda, and postponed the meeting as a sign of mourning. Starace and Farinacci<sup>42</sup> were opposed to this, but I insisted, and Federzoni<sup>43</sup> and Balbo agreed with me. The Duce is always bitter about the Church. I reported to him that Pignatti had said the Holy See was expecting a gesture of respect from him at the bier of the Pope, and he answered that it was too late: that he is not at all interested in the Conclave. "If the Pope is an Italian, all right; if he is a foreigner, all right just the same."

I received von Mackensen, who gave me the following explanation about the Albanian oil question. They had received a proposal, but nothing had been done, and nothing would be done. The haste with which the answer was given was a proof of German eagerness to dispel any mistrust inside the Axis.

The Duce praised the way the Princess of Piedmont<sup>44</sup> had devoted herself to organizing poor relief in Alto Adige. He

<sup>41</sup> Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli: Papal Nuncio to Munich, 1917; to the Reich, 1920. Secretary of State to the Vatican, 1930. Camerlengo, 1934. Elected Pope, 1939.

<sup>42</sup> Roberto Farinacci: Secretary-General of the Fascist Party until 1926. Owned the Fascist papers, "La Vita Italiana" and "La Regima Fascista." Called "The Streicher of Italy". Minister of State. Dismissed and sent to Albania, 1941. Reported shot with Mussolini, April, 1945.

<sup>43</sup> Luigi Federzoni: Leader of the Nationalist Party which merged with Mussolini's Fascists. Minister for Colonies until 1928. President of the Senate. Succeeded D'Annunzio as President of the Royal Academy of Italy. Condemned to death in his absence at the Ciano Trial.

<sup>44</sup> Princess Maria of Piedmont: Wife of Prince Umberto and sister of King Leopold of the Belgians.

said that the Princess had a holy fear of him and that very often she would ask him questions and seek his advice. Once, he said, she took out a notebook and, following an entry with her finger, asked the Duce the meaning of the statement that now the Grand Council must regulate the succession to the Throne. The Duce answered that this would be the case only if there were no direct heir, or in exceptional circumstances. She seemed to be satisfied, but the question proved how much the members of the Royal Family are worried about the future.

FEBRUARY 12, 1939. The Duce agreed to participate in the Pope's funeral, which has been fixed by the Nunciature for the seventeenth. That decision pleases me, because it will create a good impression upon the Conclave. In some American circles it is rumoured that Pacelli has a document written by the Pope. The Duce desires Pignatti to find out, and, if it is true, to try to get a copy of the document<sup>45</sup> "... in order to avoid a repetition of the Filipelli incident".<sup>46</sup>

Calm, for the time being, in other fields.

Gorgeous weather this Sunday, warm and sunny, the Roman winter at its best. I spent a great part of the day playing golf.

FEBRUARY 13, 1939. General Piccio:<sup>47</sup> pro-French. He reported some conversations of minor importance with Flandin and Laval, both of whom complain that they have been put in a difficult position through our requests, just when they had been able to obtain approval for the appointment of a new French ambassador. Paul-Boncour was more inclined to be conciliatory. He said: "You have been too exigent; but we are too intransigent." Piccio says that French armaments are shortly going to be most imposing.

Lord Perth spoke to me again about the forces we are sending to Libya. Nothing to be done. The proportion between the Arab population of Libya and that of the French Empire is

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<sup>45</sup> Just before his death the Pope was writing a speech, to be delivered to the bishops of Italy, on the relations between Italy and the Vatican. It was rumoured in Rome that this speech was a strong denunciation of the Fascist violations of the Lateran Treaties. Copies of it were destroyed by Vatican officials.

<sup>46</sup> Giacomo Matteotti, a Socialist Deputy, denounced Fascism and charged it with frauds and illegalities during the election of April, 1924. He was abducted and murdered by the Fascists. Filipelli, editor of the "Corriere Italiano," published an account of the murder implicating Mussolini.

<sup>47</sup> General Piccio: Air Attaché at the Italian Embassy in Paris.

18 to 1; that of the armed forces is actually 1 to 8. We must be in a position to defend ourselves. This right cannot be denied us by any clause in any Italo-British agreement.

The Duce comments on the incident between Goebbels and Froelich<sup>48</sup> and says: "Goebbels is wrong, not because he seduced Froelich's wife, but rather because he permitted his face to be slapped." The commercial agreement between Italy and Germany has been signed. It covers many points and, according to the experts, is very satisfactory.

FEBRUARY 14, 1939. The Swiss Minister came to express his regrets for the misdeeds of his country's press, and the Spanish Ambassador told me that General Jordana<sup>49</sup> has rejected a French suggestion to send a secret agent into Spain, and also France's request for a declaration of Spanish neutrality. The Duce said that with regard to Albania we must await two events: the settling of the Spanish affair, and the alliance with Germany. In the meantime, we must spread the most varied rumours; like the octopus we must darken the waters. With regard to France, he repeated that it is desirable for the moment to await the development of Baudouin's undertaking. If there are no developments, we shall put the question: Will you or will you not do business? If not, we shall prepare for war without delay. He again told me that we are in possession of a secret weapon which, "though not miraculous, could, none the less, affect the course of the war".

The Dutch Minister made tentative but energetic representations with regard to the problem of the Dutch Jews, but he calmed down when I told him that we might have done something as a gracious gesture, but never under pressure. Imagine the Dutch trying to be tough with us!

FEBRUARY 15, 1939. A little personal episode: Starace caught the honourable Martire,<sup>50</sup> former member of the Popular

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<sup>48</sup> Gustav Froelich, a leading German film actor, resented the attentions paid by Goebbels to his wife, Lida Barova, and knocked him down. Froelich was then sent to a concentration camp.

<sup>49</sup> General Count Francisco Gomez Jordana: Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1938-9. President, Council of State, 1940. Returned to Foreign Ministry 1942, after dismissal of Serrano Suner. Pursued policy of keeping Spain out of the war. Died in San Sebastian, August, 1944.

<sup>50</sup> Egilberto Martire: Member of the Italian Parliament and one of the leaders of the Catholic Party.

party, and a Fascist since 1932, in the corridors of the Chamber of Deputies in the act of trying to cast a slur on my name, saying that I had the "evil eye". As the candle of his petty malice was guttering out, he would have done well to tumble into bed in the dark; but he had other ideas, and preferred to try to "stab me in the back", as the Duce said later. Result: Martire was very properly handcuffed and sent to jail; Ferretti, who was present at the incident, and who failed to report it, was expelled from the Party. In itself the incident was insignificant, but from it the following good and bad deductions can be made. Bad: the moral inadequacy of certain people whom we have admitted to our ranks, and who, in the shadows of the Littorio, continue their shameful mud-slinging. Good: it proved the Duce's favourable attitude towards me, since he reacted with a violence such as, according to Starace, he had never shown before. Starace also behaved admirably: loyal, strong, a true friend.

In the evening the Grand Council met. They approved the school reform proposals. The Duce spoke to me of the Martire affair, and expressed his regrets for not having been able to beat him up personally. And he added that seventeen years of governing have denied him "the pleasure of fighting several dozen duels".

FEBRUARY 16, 1939. Albania is restless. We have received a telegram from our military attaché at Tirana which has somewhat disturbed the Duce; he said that King Zog wanted to order partial mobilization, and that Jacomoni had left by air for Rome. The situation is not so dramatic as all that. I have seen Jacomoni, who, in fact, appears quite calm. Yesterday he saw the King, who, after having listened to our complaints, said that he, too, had something to say. He asserted that in Belgrade the partition of Albania had been discussed, but he mentioned certain particulars which show that he was only partially and incorrectly informed. He also mentioned the preparation for an internal revolt, supported especially by refugees—a statement which was completely false. He cited the names of many people who were involved; except for Koci, these names were incorrect. He concluded by reaffirming his desire to reach an understanding with us, and he sent Jacomoni as his representative with full powers

to make the agreement. When I reported to the Duce by telephone he answered: "If we had already signed our Pact with Berlin we could attack immediately. As things stand, we have to procrastinate." Then he confirmed the instructions which I had already sent to Jacomoni two days ago, which are as follows: to keep alive the popular agitation, but not to fail to placate King Zog, giving him every reassurance he desires. To keep the waters troubled, so that our real intentions will not be known.

FEBRUARY 19, 1939. Grandi's recall from London is due to some information about him which has come to the Duce, but of which I know neither the tenor nor the source. The Duce said: "It is time that this gloomy, ambiguous, and unfaithful Grandi came back to bathe in the atmosphere of the regime, and be de-Anglicized. I will tell him personally that I have come to know things about him which have displeased me." The Duce read a letter written by Nitti<sup>51</sup> to Aldrovani<sup>52</sup> after the publication of his memoirs. The letter attacks Sonnino<sup>53</sup> pitilessly, calling him "a bad Christian, a bad Jew, and above all, a bad Minister". Mussolini himself admits that the letter is written with a good sense of humour.

The Duce is becoming more and more bitter against France, and he said that in these last months the French have reached the limit of their perfidy and hate. He defined them as a "mean people". The Italians already hate France, but the Duce intends to work this hatred up to a climax in the course of the next few months. When he has waged war and beaten France he will show the Italians "how a peace in Europe should be made". He will not ask for indemnities, but will go in for wholesale destruction. Many cities will be levelled to the ground. He is, however, dissatisfied with the preparations of the two Service Departments of State: War and Aviation. While

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<sup>51</sup> Francesco Saverio Nitti: Prime Minister of Italy, 1919-20. Liberated by Allies from prison camp in the Alps, May, 1945.

<sup>52</sup> Count Luigi Aldrovani-Marescotti: At various times Minister to the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Egypt and Argentine. Author of "Guerre Diplomatica."

<sup>53</sup> Baron Sidney Sonnino: Financial expert and politician of pre-Fascist era. Minister of Finance, 1893. Prime Minister, February 8-May 26, 1906, and again from December 10, 1909, to March 31, 1910. Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1914. Italian Delegate to the Peace Conference of 1919.



naval preparation is perfect, he does not know what is going on in the other two Departments. I warn him again about Valle<sup>54</sup> who, on too many occasions, has made assertions and promises which are either untrue or impracticable.

FEBRUARY 20, 1939. On his return from Belgrade, Christic<sup>55</sup> repeated to me what we already more or less knew of the Yugoslav crisis. He conferred with the Regent, who is very much bent on justifying himself with us for having double-crossed Stoyadinovich. In any case, he gives many assurances of continued good relations with the Axis which we cannot ignore. Christic informed me also of a meeting he had had with one of the leaders of the Opposition, Gavrilovic, who asked him to tell me that if he comes to power he will strengthen his ties with us. The situation of the present Cabinet is weak; either Stoyadinovich will return to power by April, or the Opposition will form a new Government.

The Duce has referred Nitti's letter to the King, and had a copy sent to me. The King generally shares Nitti's opinions on Sonnino, and has said of Nitti that he was a man of clear vision and of great ability, but that these fundamental qualities were spoiled by "an unreasonable panic" which took possession of him at the slightest rustling of the leaves.

Exchange of telephone calls with Ribbentrop, in order to arrange a joint *démarche* by our ambassadors to Franco aimed at persuading him to adhere to our Anti-Comintern Pact.<sup>56</sup> The step will be taken when the Japanese Ambassador has also received his instructions. If Franco joins, we shall have put an end to the rumours which are spreading, even in Italy, about his too many intimate contacts with the Western democracies.

FEBRUARY 21, 1939. The joint action is no longer necessary, since Franco has decided to adhere to the Anti-Comintern Pact. He communicated this decision to our am-

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<sup>54</sup> General Giuseppe Valle: Under-Secretary for Aviation and Chief of Air Staff, 1936-9. Resigned October, 1939, and replaced by General Pricolo.

<sup>55</sup> Christic: Yugoslav Minister to Italy.

<sup>56</sup> Anti-Comintern Pact: Ciano, for Italy, signed the German-Japanese anti-communist agreement of 1936 in November, 1937. Italy had the status of an original signatory. Ciano declared that the Pact had no hidden aims, and was open to all States who wished to range themselves against Bolshevism.

bassadors, but it is to remain a secret until complete victory. Both we and the Germans have accepted this solution, which is a good one because, in effect, it gives us the egg to-day and the chicken to-morrow.

Jacomoni referred to the Albanian situation: the King and his supporters have declared formally that they wish to re-establish the most cordial relations with us, but Jacomoni fears that this may be a manœuvre to gain time for the King to proceed with his attempts to come to terms with other Powers. Jacomoni feels that the situation should be brought to a head at once. The Duce and I do not agree with him. I instruct him by telegraph to steer cautiously for some time yet, while we are waiting for certain international events which will make it easier for us to deliver our blow. Grandi has returned to Rome and received the news about his recall from London with much distress. He still hopes, however, to be able to change Mussolini's decision when he sees him. However, he realizes that something has happened to his relations with Mussolini, who, for some years now, has been cold and distant in his attitude towards him.

The Fascist legions have marched into Barcelona in great style and amid enthusiastic applause. Gambara will be in Rome to-morrow for consultation.

FEBRUARY 22, 1939. The Duce is very pleased about Franco's decision to adhere to the Anti-Comintern Pact. The event is of great importance and will influence all future happenings in Europe. After three centuries of inactivity Spain thus again becomes a living and dynamic factor, and, what is more important, an anti-French factor. Those silly people who tried so hard to criticize our intervention in Spain will one day perhaps understand that on the Ebro, at Barcelona, and at Malaga the foundations of the Roman Mediterranean Empire were laid.

Villani proposed a visit by Teleki<sup>57</sup> to Italy next April. I accepted with great pleasure, because I like Teleki, and I respect him as the best Prime Minister Hungary has ever had.

Christic gives me hopes about Stoyadinovich. He said that the personal jealousy of the Regent played a great role in the

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<sup>57</sup> Count Paul Teleki: Hungarian Prime Minister. Committed suicide in 1941.

crisis, but he believes and hopes that in a few months Stoyadinovich will be in power again.

Arrival of Gambara. He made a very good report about matters in Spain. Either Madrid will capitulate dramatically in a short time, or else at the end of March five columns will give the death-blow to Red Spain. The situation in Catalonia is good. Franco improved it with a very thorough and drastic purge. Many Italians, anarchist and communist, also were taken prisoner. I informed the Duce about this, and he ordered them all to be shot, adding: "Dead men tell no tales."

FEBRUARY 23, 1939. Attolico has sent a very interesting account of his conversation with the Egyptian Minister to Berlin, Mourad Pasha. He speaks in the name of his King, who declares himself to be anti-British, and asks whether, in the event of Egypt proclaiming her neutrality and Great Britain attempting to intervene, directly or indirectly, the Axis will be ready to support King Farouk. This matter is so serious that I felt bound to make a number of reservations, even though the source of the information is very reliable. In agreement with the Duce I authorize Attolico to continue his conversations and to make it clear that any effort to weaken the ties between Egypt and London finds approval here.

The Duce eulogizes Gambara in grand style. Gambara expounds his coming plan of action, which is not wholly approved by the Duce, who would like to see the forces more concentrated. The Duce realizes, however, that, in the present state of disintegration of Red Spain, Franco's plan to spread out the national armies all over the country might give excellent results. He offers Gambara still another division, but Gambara refuses, and asks instead for two battalions of Alpini and a group of Alpine artillery, and these are immediately granted.

Discussion between the Duce and Grandi in the afternoon. The Duce was subtle rather than severe with him. In any case, he told Grandi that his mission was finished, since it would lose its purpose after the signing of the Tripartite Alliance, and since he, Grandi, was becoming too English. He promised to give him another job when he leaves London.

FEBRUARY 24, 1939. On my way to Warsaw. Stopped at Vienna, where we had dinner at the Three Hussars. This

city has a sleepy, tired appearance. Rochira<sup>58</sup> made the statement that life in the fashionable central district has considerably deteriorated, but that the great mass of the people are working, live better than formerly, and are more and more favourably disposed towards the regime.

FEBRUARY 25, 1939. I arrive in Warsaw. The welcome of the population was characterized by curiosity and perhaps by a certain amount of sympathy, but there was no great enthusiasm. The city is grey, flat, and very gloomy, even though a tired, strange sun lighted without warming the streets of this characterless capital. I was very much irritated by the information I received about small anti-German demonstrations which have broken out here and there in all the Polish cities. They have been provoked by incidents at Danzig. Poland, in spite of all Beck's efforts and plans, is fundamentally and constitutionally anti-German. Its tradition, its instincts, and its interest make it opposed to Germany. It is a Catholic country with large numbers of Jews as well as strong German minorities. It inevitably contains all the elements of opposition to imperialism. On the other hand, we Italians are regarded with a general sympathy, which, however, brings us no benefits. The Poles are more interested in our art than in our way of living. They know our monuments better than our history. Basically, they do not consider us as we like to be considered. Too many painters, sculptors, and architects have represented Italy in Poland in the past, and continue to represent us with the inevitable servility of the artist who, in distant lands, finds a foreign Mæcenas. They love in us our artistic nature rather than the strength of our arms, in which they still do not completely believe. We must work hard to correct the bad name the past three centuries have given us.

I have talks with everybody, but especially with Beck. There was nothing sensational in our discussion. Poland will continue the policy of appeasement which her geographical situation demands. With Russia, nothing more than strictly necessary contacts. With France, defensive alliance on which the Poles place no undue reliance. With Germany, a good-neighbour

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<sup>58</sup> Ubaldo Rochira: Italian Consul-General in Vienna and Zagreb.

policy, maintained with difficulty because of many spiritual and practical differences. It will be necessary to arrive at a solution regarding Danzig, but Beck wants this solution to emerge from free diplomatic negotiations, without useless and damaging pressure by public opinion. There is still a great deal of uneasiness about the Ruthenian problem. We and the Poles are unwilling to consider Czechoslovakia's frontiers as final, and they still hope for the realization of a common frontier with Hungary. Concern about the Ukrainian problem weighs heavily on the Polish mind, though the Poles do not talk about it. Beck frequently emphasizes with satisfaction, though without conviction, the assurances given him by Hitler.

FEBRUARY 27, 1939. In speaking about the present situation of Czechoslovakia he defined it as "a temporary arrangement that may last for a long time without, however, ceasing to be a temporary arrangement". I confined myself to a general discussion, in the course of which I stressed as much as possible the ties that link us to Germany.

I had conversations with the German and Japanese Ambassadors, with the Papal Nuncio, and with the Hungarian and Yugoslav Ministers. I visited military establishments, and I was particularly interested in the Air Force, which made a good impression on me. I am not able to say much about the internal structure of the country, because I have not been able to observe it to any extent. But it is far from being a totalitarian regime, in spite of the fact that the only voice which counts in Poland is that of a dead man, Pilsudski, and there are far too many who vie for the title of being the true depositories of his wisdom. Besides, the fact that he has remained as a posthumous dictator proves that no new force has as yet manifested itself. Otherwise, even Marshal Pilsudski, like all dead people, would have quickly been forgotten.

Summarizing my impressions in terms of our own interests, it would be foolish to conclude that Poland has been won over to the Axis, but it would be too pessimistic to describe her as altogether hostile.

FEBRUARY 28, 1939. When the great crisis comes, Poland will remain a long time on the alert, and only when the issue of the struggle becomes clear will she come in on the side of the

victor. And this is right, because she is a country that has friends and enemies on both sides.

Went hunting at Bialowieza, a magnificent forest, wild and primitive, and very well stocked with rare game.

MARCH 1, 1939. Cracow: monuments and palaces, which to the Poles seem so many and so beautiful, but which in our eyes amount to very little.

MARCH 2, 1939. Return journey. At Tarvisio I received the report of the election of Cardinal Pacelli to the papacy. It did not surprise me. I recall the meeting I had with him on February 10th. He was very conciliatory, and it seems also that in the meantime he has improved relations with Germany. In fact, Pignatti said only yesterday that he is the Cardinal preferred by the Germans. I had already said to Edda at dinner, and to my colleagues: "The Pope will be elected to-day. It is going to be Pacelli, who will take the name of Pius XII." My prediction interested everybody.

MARCH 3, 1939. The Duce is very dissatisfied with Guariglia,<sup>59</sup> and intends to get rid of him soon, together with Rosso<sup>60</sup> and Valentino.<sup>61</sup>

Back in Rome. I found nothing particularly new in internal politics. At the Foreign Ministry I saw my colleagues and Alfieri,<sup>62</sup> who gave me a résumé of the events of the last few days. The Duce has gone to Terminillo. He telephoned me, saying that he would like to see me, and in the afternoon I went there.

He was interested in my none too optimistic report on Poland. I must admit that, even from Rome, the Duce had always seen the Polish situation with greater clarity than those who have spent many long years on the spot. He called Poland "an empty nut". He is satisfied with Pacelli's election. He promised to send the Pope some advice on how he can usefully govern

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<sup>59</sup> Raffaello Guariglia: Italian Ambassador to Argentina, 1938, to Paris, 1938-43, to Turkey, 1943. Appointed Foreign Minister in Badoglio's Government, 1943.

<sup>60</sup> Augusto Rosso: Italian Ambassador to Moscow, 1936-41, to Spain, 1943. Secretary-General to the Foreign Office, August, 1943.

<sup>61</sup> Baron Pietro Arone di Valentino: Italian Ambassador to Warsaw, 1939.

<sup>62</sup> Dino Alfieri: Lawyer by profession. Minister of Press and Propaganda, 1938-9. Ambassador to the Vatican, 1939. Condemned to death in his absence at the Ciano Trial. Escaped to Switzerland.

the Church. He does not, however, intend to use Tacchi-Venturi,<sup>63</sup> who, in his opinion, has outlived his usefulness. We discussed at length the Tripartite Alliance. New delays have resulted from Japanese procedure and formalism. The Duce is more and more favourable to a bilateral alliance with Berlin, leaving out Tokyo. As our ally, Japan will definitely push the United States into the arms of the Western democracies. He wanted to accelerate the completion of the Italo-German alliance. He said that the delay has been the cause of certain unpleasant events recently, such as the fall of Stoyadinovich. He thinks that Stoyadinovich will return to power when we sign the Pact with Berlin. With reference to Albania, he approves of letting matters slide, but has it in the back of his mind to act as soon as the Spanish affair is settled and the Alliance concluded—whether an alliance of two or of three Powers.

MARCH 4, 1939. I communicated to the Swiss Minister that the measures taken in my absence against Swiss journalists have been suspended. These might have been revoked altogether if the press had taken a more moderate attitude. I saw Lord Perth—a conference of little importance since he kept referring to the article in *Relazioni Internazionali*<sup>64</sup> which threatened war against France. I answered that the article reflected the personal opinion of its author and that, strange as it may seem, the review is directed by Pirelli, that is, by a man notoriously tied to London and Paris by bonds of sympathy. On the other hand, I called his attention to the reinforcement of the British garrison in Egypt.

During the afternoon I saw Lyautey; it was a useless conversation. He talked a great deal but said little. However, he said enough to make it clear that his Government was very much concerned about our attitude. I was personally cordial to him, but as far as politics were concerned completely uncommunicative.

I spoke briefly to von Mackensen of my trip to Poland and

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<sup>63</sup> Father Tacchi-Venturi: A Jesuit priest in the confidence of the Pope. In 1929 he played a large part in the negotiations referred to above which led to the Lateran Treaties.

<sup>64</sup> "Relazioni Internazionali": A review dealing with international affairs, founded by Ciano and Pirelli and published in Milan.

gave him my impressions, which coincide with those expressed by Moltke, the Ambassador.

The Duce told me to decline an invitation to dinner from François-Poncet to meet the special delegation for the coronation of the Pope. Many of its members have written against Italy, and it is this which prompted the Duce's action.

Telephone conversation with von Ribbentrop; he is still certain of the participation of Japan in the Tripartite Pact but feels that weeks may be necessary in order to reach a conclusion.

MARCH 5, 1939. Gambara came to say good-bye. We agreed on details about the dispatch of further contingents to Spain. I brought him with me to see the Duce, who confirmed the instructions given in previous conversations. He added that he means to keep the troops in Spain as long as there is fighting but does not intend to leave them there for police purposes. He instructed Gambara to tell Franco of his distinct aversion to the restoration of the monarchy. "The return of the monarchy would be equivalent to plunging Spain into a new civil war within three years. The King is entirely discredited, and the best that can be said of his sons is that they are morons, completely at the service of Britain and France." I reported to the Duce on my conversation with Ribbentrop. The Duce is vexed by the delay in signing the Alliance. This delay leaves the small countries at a loss. They see in the present situation only one stable element: the rearmament of France and Britain.

Jacomoni assured us that order has returned in Albania, and that the King, after having had the greatest scare of his life, goes to extremes in demonstrating his friendship for us. He has sent me his "fraternal" greetings. The fact is that none of the actors has talked, and that the play has only been postponed. Pignatti said that the Vatican is trying to give the impression that Italy is opposed to the nomination of Cardinal Maglione<sup>65</sup> as Secretary of State—a nomination which the Pope has at heart. I spoke to the Duce in order to get his authorization to publish a denial. He answered: "Tell Pignatti that I don't give a damn about the Pope, the Cardinal Secretary of State,

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<sup>65</sup> Cardinal Maglione: Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the Vatican. Died 1944.



or anybody who occupies such positions." I have published the denial just the same, though in different language.

MARCH 6, 1939. Last night at the Casa Colonna<sup>66</sup> Pietromarchi<sup>67</sup> telephoned with news of the insurrection at Cartagena and of the escape of the Red Spanish fleet; Franco requested our air co-operation to trace the eleven vessels wandering in the Mediterranean and to prevent them from slipping past Sicily, in case they should try to go to Odessa as has already been suggested. I notified the Navy and the Air Force, and this morning at eight o'clock I informed the Duce, who approved what I had done. The fleet was pursued during the day; it tried to enter Algiers but was denied permission. It now seems to be going towards Bizerta.

Considerable rivalry among the candidates for the National Council of Corporations. Names may change but not the spirit, nor is it easy to eradicate from the hearts of Italians, even though they may be Fascists, their attachment to Parliament. Information from Berlin indicates that the Japanese Government is raising objections to signing the Tripartite Pact.

Oshima<sup>68</sup> plans to resign. He affirmed that it is necessary for the Cabinet to fall. What will happen after this? I do not understand. But is it really possible to take into European political life a country like Japan which is so far away, which has become more and more convulsed and nervous, and is ready to change its ideas from one hour to the next as the result of a simple telephone call?

MARCH 7, 1939. Nothing outstanding.

MARCH 8, 1939. Meeting of the Central Corporative Committee at the Palazzo Venezia for the adjustment of wages of private and government employees on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Fascisti. The Duce was very well satisfied with the provision made, and he told me: "With this we really shorten the distance between social classes. Socialism used to say all equal and all rich. Experience has proved this to be impossible. We say, all equal and all sufficiently poor."

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<sup>66</sup> Prince Piero Colonna: Governor of Rome.

<sup>67</sup> Count Luca Pietromarchi: Chief of the Economic Warfare Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>68</sup> General Hiroshi Oshima: Japanese Ambassador to Berlin

I saw the Japanese Ambassador. He confirmed what Attolico has written concerning the Japanese answer on the Tripartite Alliance. They make many reservations, and intend to give the Pact merely an anti-Russian character. The answer was so unsatisfactory as to make one doubt the possibility of effectively concluding this alliance. Oshima and Shiratori<sup>69</sup> refused to treat this as an official communication. They have asked Tokyo to accept the pact of alliance without reservations, otherwise they will resign and will provoke the fall of the Cabinet. We shall have a decision in a few days. Shiratori maintains that if the decision is favourable the Pact can be signed in Berlin in March, otherwise everything will be postponed indefinitely. The delay and the Japanese emphasis on procedure make me very sceptical about the possibility of an effective collaboration between the phlegmatic and slow Japanese and the dynamic Fascists and Nazis.

MARCH 9, 1939. At Belgrade during a royal hunt organized by the Regent Paul, I met a Croat, the Marquis of Bombelles,<sup>70</sup> who was described to me as a country gentleman, friend of the Prince, and a great hunter. To-day I received him in Rome, believing that he was making a courtesy call. Instead, he at once began to talk about the political situation and revealed himself to be the secret agent of the Ustasci<sup>71</sup>. He spoke of the relations between Croatia and Serbia, and pointed out that the chasm which separates these two countries is now so wide as to make any idea of conciliation out of the question. The Croats are kept in a state of moral, political, and economic servitude. If, some day, it should come about that as a result of mobilization arms were put in the hands of the Croats, their rifles would fire of themselves at the Serbs. He envisages Croatia as an autonomous kingdom with an Italian prince, best of all, one connected with the Italian Royal family. Bombelles did not ask for anything. He merely wanted to keep us informed and to put us on guard against the politics of Belgrade, which have always been treacherous, but which,

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<sup>69</sup> Toshio Shiratori: Japanese Ambassador to Italy.

<sup>70</sup> Marquis of Bombelles: A Croatian mediator between Ciano and Croat Agrarian leader Matchek.

<sup>71</sup> The Ustasci were a Croatian Terrorist organization, responsible for the murder at Marseilles in 1934 of King Alexander.

particularly since the fall of Stoyadinovich, have been openly favourable towards the democracies and therefore against the Axis.

For obvious reasons I was very prudent. I confirmed our adherence to the Belgrade pacts so long as the Serbs behave well towards us. However, I told Bombelles that I was always ready to keep in touch with him and that if the situation changes we might listen to the Croat point of view in deciding our political attitude.

MARCH 10, 1939. The Duce was impressed by a report from Attolico which substantially confirmed two things: (1) that the Führer is fully committed to solidarity with Italy and is ready to march with us; (2) that the German people, while firmly supporting their chief, would prefer to avoid any danger of war. The Duce commented: "The Germans are a military people, but not a warrior people. Give the Germans a great deal of sausage, butter, beer, and a cheap car and they will never want to risk their skins."

Von Ribbentrop has accepted our proposal that the two staffs make immediate contact, and has proposed, in turn, a conference between Keitel and Pariani.<sup>72</sup> We have accepted, and have suggested Innsbruck for the meeting, which should be held as soon as possible and with considerable publicity. We must let the world know that the Axis is also preparing, and that it does not intend to leave the initiative to the French and British, as seems to have been the case for some time.

The American Ambassador has asked me whether it is true that a tripartite meeting is being planned in Berlin for the purpose of signing the Alliance. I said that for the time being there is nothing in all this, but that it is possible such a meeting might take place if developments should necessitate the three anti-Comintern countries making the ties between them more binding.

MARCH 11, 1939. Gambarà reported on his meeting with Franco. During the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth of this month final operations will begin. We will attack

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<sup>72</sup> General Alberto Pariani: Under-Secretary for War and Chief of Staff until 1940, when he was succeeded by Graziani. Sentenced by the Rome High Court in March, 1945, to 15 years' imprisonment.

Toledo. Both militarily and politically the meeting went well. Franco expressed himself in clearly anti-monarchical terms, and he insisted that even if it should be necessary to countenance a restoration it would be a matter of waiting for many years.

The Polish agitation has aroused new hopes in the hearts of the Hungarians on the Ruthenian problem. If the Germans go into Slovakia the Hungarians intend to achieve a common frontier—a dream which they will not give up. Villani came to tell me this. I asked him to be calm and to wait. In the meantime the news which we got by telephone in the evening made the crisis appear less serious, and we are told in Berlin that the Slovaks will find a solution on their own. On the occasion of the second anniversary of the Belgrade Pact, Christic reaffirmed his belief in the return of Stoyadinovich after the present Government has failed in its attempts to come to terms with Matchek.<sup>73</sup> He said: "The Croat problem goes back for generations. If King Alexander, with all his authority, did not succeed in solving it, a Government with so little authority and so short-lived as this one will certainly not find a solution."

MARCH 12, 1939. Coronation of the Holy Father. I attended the ceremony as head of the Italian delegation. It was quite cold and there was considerable disorder in the organization of the pontifical protocol. The Pope was as solemn as a statue; a month ago he was a cardinal and a mere man among men. To-day he seemed truly touched by the divine spirit.

MARCH 13, 1939. Nothing of particular importance for us. The Duce does not intend to give any special significance to the Slovak crisis, which is developing and assuming disquieting proportions. Goering left San Remo in order to take part in a cabinet meeting. What can be Germany's intention? For the present nothing has been said except that there have been vague expressions of dissatisfaction with the Prague Government.

Naturally they are also beginning to be excited in Warsaw and Budapest.

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<sup>73</sup> Vladimir Matchek: Lawyer and publicist. Former President of the Zagreb County Council. Several times interned for propaganda in favour of Croatian autonomy. Leader of the Croatian Peasant Party. Deputy Prime Minister, 1931-41. Sent to a concentration camp in Germany.

Let us wait. Our role in this case can only be that of awaiting the development of events.

MARCH 14, 1939. A long conversation with Wellington Koo<sup>74</sup> about the Sino-Japanese situation. He, too, like all the Chinese, puts his trust in the time factor and the ultimate exhaustion of Japan. I advised him to come to an agreement directly with Tokyo without depending on the promises of help that have come from the so-called democracies.

The Duke of Aosta spoke with considerable optimism about the condition of the Ethiopian Empire. I must, however, add that among the many people who have come from there he is the only optimist. He urges us to avoid a conflict with France, which would involve us in naval warfare and jeopardize the Empire. I do not quite understand whether he was speaking as the Viceroy of Ethiopia or as the son of a French princess.

News from Central Europe is becoming increasingly grave. For the first time von Ribbentrop has spoken with Attolico and has given him to understand that the German programme has been completed; it is, to incorporate Bohemia in the Reich, to make Slovakia a vassal state, and to yield Ruthenia to the Hungarians. It is not known as yet when all this will take place, but such events are bound to produce the most sinister impression on the Italian people. The Axis functions only in favour of one of its parts, which tends to preponderate, and acts entirely on its own initiative with little regard for us. I expressed my point of view to the Duce. He was cautious in his reaction and did not seem to attach great importance to the event. He has sought a recompense in the advantages which Hungary will have by achieving a common frontier with the Poles, and he instructed me to tell Budapest to move boldly. But to me this seems very little.

MARCH 15, 1939. Events are precipitated during the night. After a meeting between Hitler, Hacha,<sup>75</sup> and Chwal-

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<sup>74</sup> Dr. V. K. Wellington Koo: Chinese Ambassador to France, 1936-41, to Great Britain from 1941-6. Appointed Ambassador to U.S.A., 1946.

<sup>75</sup> Emil Hacha: Czech Jurist. President of the Senate Supreme Court of Administration, Prague, 1918-38. Former Judge at the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague. President of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1938-9. State President of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, 1939. Signed Treaty of Berlin surrendering Czech independence to Germany, March, 1939. Died June, 1945, while awaiting trial as a war criminal.

kosky,<sup>76</sup> German troops began their occupation of Bohemia. The thing is serious, especially since Hitler had assured everyone that he did not want to annex one single Czech. This German action does not destroy the Czechoslovakia of Versailles, but the one that was constructed at Munich and at Vienna. What weight can be given in the future to those declarations and promises which concern us more directly? It is useless to deny that all this worries and humiliates the Italian people. It is necessary to give them satisfaction and compensation: Albania. I spoke about it to the Duce, to whom I also expressed my conviction that at this time we shall find neither local obstacles nor serious international complications in the way of our advance. He authorized me to telegraph to Jacomoni, asking him to prepare local revolts, and he personally ordered the Navy to hold the second squadron ready at Taranto.

I conferred with Cavagnari,<sup>77</sup> and after having given telegraphic instructions to Tirana, I was able to speak by telephone with Jacomoni, who was on his way to headquarters. He said that to-morrow he will telegraph us what he thinks can be done. He foresees handing this ultimatum to the King: either he accepts the arrival of the Italian troops and asks for a protectorate, or the troops will arrive anyway. I conferred again with the Duce, and he seemed to me to be less cool about the operation.

In the meantime Hesse<sup>78</sup> arrived with the usual message. This time it is a verbal message, and not very satisfactory. The Führer sends word that he acted because the Czechs would not demobilize their military forces; because they were continuing to keep their contacts with Russia, and because they mistreated Germans. Such pretexts may be good for Goebbels's propaganda, but they should not use them when talking with us, whose only fault is that we deal too loyally with the Germans. In adding the Führer's thanks for unshakable Italian support, Hesse said that this operation frees

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<sup>76</sup> Frantisek Karel Chwalkosky: Czech Minister to Italy, 1932-8. Minister to Germany, 1939.

<sup>77</sup> Admiral Domenico Cavagnari: Chief of Naval Staff, 1933-40.

<sup>78</sup> Prince of Hesse: German prince married to Princess Mafalda, daughter of King Victor Emmanuel, and used as a Special Emissary in Rome.

twenty divisions for use in some other zone, and for the support of Axis policy. But Hitler advises Mussolini that if he intends to undertake an action in grand style, it is better to wait a couple of years, when the available Prussian divisions will be one hundred. They could have spared themselves this addition. The Duce protested, asserting that in case of war with France we shall fight without asking Germany for a single man, happy only to receive from them arms and other equipment.

I returned to the Duce after Hesse left. I found him unhappy and depressed over the message. He did not wish to give Hesse's news to the press ("the Italians would laugh at me; every time Hitler occupies a country he sends me a message"). He continued to talk about Albania, but he has not as yet made a decision. Some doubt, which he has not yet revealed to me, disturbs his mind. He was calm, as always when the situation is grave, but he has not yet reacted in the way I expected. He wants me to return during the evening.

I received the Polish Ambassador and the Rumanian Minister, who accept the accomplished fact with dignity.

I saw the Duce again in the late afternoon. He is fully aware of the hostile reaction of the Italian people, but he affirms that we must, after all, accept the German trick with good grace and avoid "displeasing God and also God's enemies".<sup>79</sup> He mentions again the possibility of a blow in Albania, but is still doubtful. Even the occupation of Albania could not, in his opinion, counterbalance in world public opinion the incorporation into the Reich of Bohemia, one of the richest territories of the world. Furthermore, to Admiral Cavagnari, whom the Duce received before me, he put only general questions regarding the possibility of making a landing, but did not give instructions of any kind. Too bad! I am convinced that our going into Albania would have raised the morale of the country and would have been an effective result of the Axis policy, after which we could have re-examined our policy with regard to Germany, whose hegemony begins to be disturbing.

MARCH 16, 1939. Mussolini called me to the Villa

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<sup>79</sup> "Dispiace a Dio ed a nemici suoi"—a quotation from the "Divina Commedia."

Torlonia at nine o'clock in the morning. He looked sullen. He said that he had thought a great deal during the night, and that he had come to the conclusion that the Albanian operation must be postponed because he fears that, disturbing the unity of Yugoslavia, it might favour an independent Croatia under German rule, which would mean that the Ustasci would be in Sussak. It is not worth while to take this risk in order to get Albania, for we can have her at almost any other time. I can see that Mussolini has made up his mind; no use insisting. I ordered Jacomoni to let everything rest. I kept a note written by the Duce, in which he lists the reasons for the postponement of the Albanian action.

I had another meeting with the Duce. He now believes that Prussian hegemony in Europe is established. In his opinion a coalition of all other powers, including ourselves, could check German expansion, but could not undo it. He did not count too much on the military help which the small powers could give. I asked whether, as things stand, it would be more desirable for us to bind ourselves in an alliance rather than to maintain our full freedom to orient ourselves in the future according to our best interests. The Duce declared himself decidedly in favour of the alliance. I expressed my misgivings, because the alliance will not be popular in Italy, and also because I fear that Germany might take advantage of it to push ahead its policy of political expansion in Central Europe.

Finally, I saw the Duce for a third time during the evening. He saw de Valera, with whom he had a short and insignificant conversation. Later he received Muti, who submitted to him the plan for operations in Spain to begin on the twenty-fifth of this month. He approved it without discussion. Muti, who had not seen the Duce for two months, said that he found him tired and "aged many years". This is a temporary condition; but it is true that the latest events have profoundly shaken him. The Duce showed me the King's speech to the Chamber of the Corporations, in which I made some modifications.

A great crowd of diplomats at the Palazzo Chigi. The most worried of these was the Yugoslav Minister, who saw in Hitler's policy the marks of his Austrian origin. He said that the Germans will now aim at Budapest, and from there will



launch their offensive toward the Balkans. They should not delude themselves, however, into thinking that they can subdue the Serbs without fighting, and fighting hard. He is concerned over the repercussions in Croatia, where the separatist movement will draw new life from what has happened. Stoyadinovich has emerged strengthened from the present situation, but the time for his return to power has not yet arrived. I received von Mackensen. In a matter-of-fact way I expressed our congratulations on the German success. He did not succeed very well in hiding a gesture of surprise. This time the Germans really feel that they are double-dealers.

I also saw the Japanese Ambassador, who spoke optimistically about the decisions of his government with respect to the Tripartite Alliance.

MARCH 17, 1939. World opinion is very depressing. From all the capitals disturbing telegrams have arrived. Even in Hungary there is no celebration for the occupation of Ruthenia. Worse things are feared. I saw some diplomats: the Belgian and United States Ambassadors. They expressed their concern about the future and their indignation against Berlin. I confess that it is not easy for me to find any justification for the German action. I allowed them to infer that we were in agreement or had at least been informed, but it is such a nuisance to lie.

The Duce was anxious and gloomy. It was the first time that I had seen him thus. Even at the time of the Anschluss he had shown greater indifference. He is preoccupied by the Croatian problem. He is afraid that Matchek may proclaim independence and put himself under German protection. He says: "In such a case these are the only alternatives: either to fire the first shot against Germany or to be swept away by a revolution which the Fascists themselves will bring about. No one would tolerate the sight of a swastika in the Adriatic." He was thinking also of the possibility of delaying the sending of troops to Libya, coming to an agreement with France through London, but later he abandoned the idea. Upon my advice he decided to discuss the Croatian problem with the Germans. He said, frankly, that a change of the Yugo-

slav status quo in Croatia could not be accepted by us without a total and fundamental re-examination of our policy.

I called von Mackensen and spoke to him calmly but with considerable firmness. I recalled that the Führer had said both to me and to the Duce that the Mediterranean does not interest the Germans; and it is upon this premise that we have formulated the policy of the Axis. If such a premise should not be adhered to, the Axis would be broken and German intervention in questions relating to Croatia would automatically bring about this failure. Von Mackensen seemed to be impressed by my declaration. He insisted that the rumours which have reached us are without foundation, and he assured me "that nothing has been changed from the point of view of the Führer". He hopes that the Duce has not been upset by the information which has reached him. I assured him that the contrary was the case, and that I was talking with him about this for purposes of clarification and so that we might act always in full harmony.

Christic asked to see me, and he denied rumours of Yugoslav military movements to the Hungarian frontier. On my part I denied rumours of an Italian military expedition in Albania, and assured him that nothing would ever be done by Italy to weaken the territorial unity of Yugoslavia.

MARCH 18, 1939. Audience with the Pope; I found him exactly as when he was Cardinal Pacelli, benevolent, courteous, and human. We spoke of the situation. He did not conceal his concern over the aggressive German policy and added that as an Italian he was uneasy. He was very pleased when I told him that the Duce had already taken appropriate measures to hold back the German flood into zones of the most vital interest to us. On the religious problem he declared himself optimistic as to the Italian situation. He informed me that we can come to an agreement, and that he will remove Cardinal Pizzardo<sup>80</sup> and will entrust the direction of the Azione Cattolica to a committee of diocesan archbishops. He was most concerned about Germany and intends to follow

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<sup>80</sup> Cardinal Pizzardo: Prefect of the Congregation of Ceremonies. Former head of Catholic Action (see note 5) and Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the Vatican.

a more conciliatory policy than Pius XI, but in order to do this, co-operation from the other side is necessary; otherwise what he would do would be reduced to "a vain soliloquy". The audience lasted for half an hour. I believe that we can get along well with this Pope. I spoke at length with Cardinal Maglione. He is a southerner, full of talent and spirit, and in spite of being an ecclesiastic he can scarcely hide his exuberant temperament. Maglione, too, is concerned about the German advance, but he gave a discreet hint of the French desire to come to agreement with us, at the same time stressing the fact that he has not received any sort of commission, nor does he intend to solicit any.

A long conference with the Duce during which he re-examined the King's speech and decided to bring it up to date. I expressed clearly to the Duce my concern about Berlin. It has increased greatly since I have had proof of German disloyalty, but he still seems to be quite favourable to the Axis. I did not succeed in convincing him even when I referred to an eventual German absorption of Hungary. He said that in this event he would not protest. He personally outlined the editorial for the *Giornale d'Italia*, in which he maintains that what Germany has done is logical and that we would have acted similarly under like circumstances.

Fagioli brought me the record of a conversation with Baudouin. In it there are two interesting points: one, the French are ready to make further concessions; two, the person who revealed Baudouin's mission to the press was Ribbentrop himself on the basis of the information we had given him. Is it worth while to deal loyally with such people?

MARCH 19, 1939. Long conversation with the Duce; during the last few days he has thought a great deal about our discussion and agrees that it is now impossible to present to the Italian people the idea of an alliance with Germany. The very stones would cry out against it. Our anxiety over what is going on in Croatia is becoming more serious since all our information confirms the fact that agitation is intensifying there. We decided upon sending a telegram to Belgrade in order to inform the Regent Paul that we have called a halt to German action and at the same time to advise him to hasten

negotiations with Zagreb, because any loss of time might be fatal.

Meanwhile, the Duce has ordered a concentration of forces on the Venetian border. If the Germans think they can stop us, we shall fire on them. I am more than ever convinced that this may take place. The events of the last few days have reversed my opinion of the Führer and of Germany; he, too, is unfaithful and treacherous and we cannot collaborate with him. I have also worked to-day with the Duce for an understanding with the Western Powers. But will they have at least a minimum of good sense in Paris, or will attempts to reach an understanding be once more frustrated by unwillingness to make any concession? The Duce thinks that British irritation runs very deep at this time. "We must not forget that the British are readers of the Bible and that they combine mercantilism with mysticism. Now the latter prevails, and they are capable of going into action."

Fagioli was sent to Paris to continue negotiations with Baudouin. The Duce proposes to make our demands clear in his speech of March 26th: Jibuti, Suez, Tunis.

MARCH 20, 1939. I received the engineer Cernelutti, Matchek's special envoy. He is of Italian origin. His brother was in the Italian consular service. He was very much excited at the beginning of the conversation, and appealed to me to keep it secret because his life would be in danger. I have summarized what he said in a note. In brief, the Croats are anti-German but ready to fall into the arms of Berlin if they should be repulsed by us, if only to escape from Serbian tyranny. He repeated what had been said by Bombelles: negotiations to obtain concessions from Belgrade. If these should fail, an insurrection and an appeal for Italian military aid. The creation of a Croatian republic linked to us by a pact of alliance similar to the one which we have made with Albania but in addition including a customs and monetary union. Second phase: union with Italy. The Duce ordered me to accept the Croatian programme. To-morrow I shall confer with Cernelutti.

Von Mackensen brought an answer to my remarks of last Friday: Germany is not interested in the fate of Croatia and

recognizes the predominance of Italian interests there. He repeated that the Mediterranean is not, cannot, and must not become a German sea. I reported this to the Duce, who found the communication very interesting "provided we can believe in it". Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that this morning he was very anti-German, this evening he said: "We cannot change our policy now. After all we are not prostitutes." He instructed me to reject the proposal which had been made for Laval to come to Rome, since such a visit "would be of no use except in so far as it would advertise Laval".

The King is more than ever anti-German. He alluded to Germanic insolence and duplicity and at the same time praised the straightforwardness of the British. In speaking with the Duce he went so far as to call the Germans rascals and beggars.

Fagioli, returning from Paris, has brought communications from Daladier through Baudouin. They are rather unsatisfactory. Now it will be necessary to wait for the Duce's speech on March 26th, to which both of us have added a part dealing with foreign policy.

MARCH 21, 1939. The Western Powers have to-day lost much ground to the Germans. News about the attempts to constitute a "democratic bloc" has hardened the Duce in favour of the Germans. The title itself identifies our destinies with those of Germany and alienates countries such as Rumania, Yugoslavia, Poland, France, and Greece, which are concerned about German aggression, but still must preserve their internal authoritarian regimes. And Germany has gained another point with us, since Ribbentrop, in a letter addressed to me, renewed the solemn promise to recognize exclusive Italian rights in the Mediterranean, in the Adriatic, and in adjacent zones.

I had a conference with Canelutti and told him: first, seek an agreement with Belgrade if for no other purpose than to gain time; second, if this should fail, and you revolt, we shall intervene at the call of the Croat Government; third, abstain from every contact with Berlin, and forewarn us of your actions.

The Grand Council met during the evening. The Duce talked about the necessity of adopting a policy of uncompromising loyalty to the Axis. He made a marvellous speech,

which was argumentative, logical, cold, and heroic. Balbo and de Bono<sup>81</sup> were derisive. As a matter of fact, Balbo permitted himself to make an unfortunate remark: "You are licking Germany's boots." I protested violently, and I demonstrated to them that Mussolini's policies had always been those of a proud man. The Duce approved of what I had done, and told me that Balbo will always remain "the democratic swine who was once the orator of the Loggia Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara".<sup>82</sup>

MARCH 22, 1939. Christic assured me that Yugoslavia would not adhere to the bloc proposed by London, adding that it might do so only if Italy changed her present policy and adhered to it. I went with Attolico to the Duce, who was again irritated with Germany and smarting under the lash of the French press, which never loses an opportunity to exploit his personal susceptibilities. Attolico talked at length about the situation and about his conferences with von Ribbentrop and Hitler. He did so wisely and courageously. He stressed the fact that Germany had no wish to be dragged into a war for the following reasons as given him by Hitler: armaments are not ready and will not be ready for two years more; a navy is lacking; Japan is too engaged to be able to give any effective aid. He did say, however, that, should a crisis arise, Germany will support us. Finally, he emphasized the necessity of carefully defining our reciprocal relations, since the Germans are, perhaps without being aware of it, in process of being carried away by power mania and arrogance, and might strike at our interests. The Duce analysed the present-day situation with respect to Italian public opinion, and came to the conclusion that in order to continue the policy of the Axis it is necessary to fix the objectives of our respective policies, to establish zones of influence and of action for Italy and Germany, and to insist on Germany reabsorbing the non-Italian residents of the Alto Adige. He also intends to send a personal letter to Hitler

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<sup>81</sup> Marshal Emilio de Bono: Minister for the Colonies, 1929. Governor of Eritrea, 1934. C.-in-C. of Abyssinian campaign at the outset, October, 1935. Succeeded by Badoglio, 1935. Arrested on the orders of Badoglio after the fall of Mussolini. Condemned to death and executed, January, 1944.

<sup>82</sup> The Masonic Lodge in Ferrara, where Balbo was prominent.

stating that certain events have damaged his personal prestige.

MARCH 23, 1939. Inauguration of the new corporative Parliament. The wording of the oath has been changed; we no longer swear allegiance to the "Royal House". There is a great deal of talk about this, and those who are most outspoken are, as usual, Balbo and de Bono, who use it in order to further their petty anti-Fascist intrigues. However, I do not know whether the innovation is appropriate at this time. I knew nothing about it. If I had been forewarned I should have been strongly against it.

The Duce has decided to move more rapidly on the Albanian question, and he himself has drafted the projected agreement, which is very brief, consisting of three dry clauses which give it more the appearance of a reprieve than of an international pact. I am also preparing one with Vitetti.<sup>83</sup> It is an accord which, though couched in courteous terms, will permit us to effect the annexation of Albania. The Duce has approved it. Either Zog accepts the conditions which we lay before him, or we shall undertake the military seizure of the country. To this end we are already mobilizing and concentrating in Puglia four regiments of Bersaglieri, an infantry division, air force detachments, and all of the first naval squadron.

Chamberlain has sent a letter to the Duce. He expresses his concern over the international situation and asks the Duce's help in re-establishing mutual trust and ensuring the continuance of peace. Mussolini will answer after striking at Albania. This letter strengthens his decision to act because in it he finds another proof of the inertia of the democracies.

MARCH 24, 1939. Discussed with the Duce and Pariani our plan for action in Albania. We agreed that it is not advisable to send an ultimatum immediately, but rather to begin our negotiations with King Zog. If he tries to resist, or to outwit us, we will use force. The Duce was concerned about reactions in Belgrade, which must, for many reasons, be minimised.

Acquarone<sup>84</sup> came from the King to ask for advice on a

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<sup>83</sup> Leonardo Vitetti: Director-General of Foreign Affairs. Former Counsellor at the Italian Embassy in London, 1932-6.

<sup>84</sup> Duke Pietro Acquarone: Minister to the King's Household.

certain matter. It seems that His Majesty would like to show some appreciation of the Duce the day after to-morrow; but what? A title of nobility would not be welcome. A nomination as Chancellor of the Empire? Very well, but what difference would this make? In any case I cannot assume the responsibility for an answer without having conferred with the Duce, which I will do to-morrow morning. I believe that he will turn it down. But the King's gesture is significant just at this moment, when certain people are attempting to create the impression that there is dissension between the regime and the dynasty.

MARCH 25, 1939. As I had foreseen, the Duce refused every title and every honour. "I do not know what they could give me," he said. "Make me a prince? I would be the first to laugh at the idea; imagine people calling me Prince Mussolini! As for Chancellor of the Empire, all right, but what does it mean? I suppose it would mean that I would continue to be the head of the Government as I am now. No, nothing doing. Tell Acquarone to thank the King for me, and tell him that the only thing that I want from him is his continued co-operation."

De Ferraris left for Tirana taking with him the draft agreement for the protectorate. It is not yet possible to foresee what the developments will be, but it seems probable that King Zog will give in. There is, above all, a fact on which I am counting: the coming birth of Zog's child. Zog loves his wife and indeed his whole family very much. I believe that he will prefer to ensure a quiet future for his dear ones. And, frankly, I cannot imagine Geraldine running around fighting through the mountains of Unthi or of Mirdizu in her ninth month of pregnancy.

I had a meeting with Prince Beauvau.<sup>85</sup> I talked to him briefly about our situation with respect to France, and although he is a good friend of Italy he did not know very much about it. The speech which the Duce will make to-morrow and which is awaited by everyone will be most useful and

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<sup>85</sup> Prince Charles Louis de Beauvau-Craon. Brother-in-law of Princess Colonna, wife of the Governor of Rome.



will present the situation clearly to the whole of Europe.<sup>86</sup>

MARCH 26, 1939. Meeting of the Fascist militia. The past twenty years have certainly left their mark on them, but in spirit they remain alert and devoted.

The Duce's speech made a great impression. Only the Quadrumviri<sup>87</sup> were obviously ill at ease, particularly de Bono. The Duce, who knew of this, said that de Bono "is an old idiot; with all due respect for his age, he was always an idiot, but now in addition he is old".

After the reported fall of Madrid, Franco began the attack. To-morrow our troops will also go into action. There is every hope of success, even though the Reds give signs of intending to resist.

MARCH 27, 1939. Reactions to the Duce's speech are rather favourable. Even in France, where the fear of war dominates all minds, they prefer to accentuate the pacifist elements in the speech rather than its hostile notes. The Duce was very angry with the King this morning, when the King found an opportunity of telling him three distasteful things: (1) he was not in agreement with the policy on Albania since he did not see the point of risking such a venture in order to "grab four rocks"; (2) that the offer made by Acquarone to give the Duce some honorary title on the tenth anniversary of Fascism was decided upon in order to "forestall any repetition by the Fascists of the 'humiliation' inflicted upon the King when, without his knowledge, the Duce was given the title of Marshal of the Empire—a humiliation which the King still resents"; (3) that Conrad of Bavaria had told him that in certain quarters of Munich Mussolini is called "The Gauleiter of Italy". The Duce commented bitterly on the King's words. He said: "If Hitler had had to deal with a nincompoop of a King he would never have been able to take Austria and Czechoslovakia", and he went on declaiming that the monarchy does

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<sup>86</sup> Mussolini stated that the problems which had to be settled between Italy and France were Tunis, Jibuti and the Suez Canal. He considered a long period of peace necessary for the development of European civilization. The speech was held to have created an opportunity for an Italo-French settlement, while reaffirming the solidarity of the Axis.

<sup>87</sup> The Quadrumviri were originally Mussolini, Bianchi, Balbo and de Bono. Bianchi died in 1926.

not like Fascism because Fascism is a unifying force, "and the monarchy desires that the country be divided into two or three factions, which could be played one against the other in such a way as to permit the monarchy to control everybody without compromising itself".

Our troops have attacked in Spain and are going ahead very well.

MARCH 28, 1939. I informed the German Ambassador of Chamberlain's letter to the Duce as well as of our plans for an answer which will reaffirm our desire to preserve peace and at the same time stress Italian rights.

De Ferraris has returned from Albania with a memorandum from Jacomoni. It seems that the King is up to some sort of trickery. His answer is yes, and then he arranges for his ministers to say no. Nevertheless, the machine is in motion and can no longer be brought to a stop. Either it will function with Zog or else against him. For many reasons, primarily because we Italians do not want to be the ones to start a war in Europe, I should prefer the first alternative, but if Zog does not yield it will be necessary to have recourse to arms.

Madrid has fallen and with the capital all the other cities of Red Spain. The war is over. It is a new, formidable victory for Fascism, perhaps the greatest one so far.

Conversations of minor interest with Hesse, and with the Rumanian Minister, who tried to justify the pact between Berlin and Bucharest.

Demonstrations in the Piazza Venezia because of the fall of Madrid. The Duce is overjoyed. On pointing to the atlas open at the map of Spain he said: "It has been open in this way for almost three years, and that is enough. But I know already that I must open it at another page." He has Albania in mind.

MARCH 29, 1939. I had two meetings with the Duce in order to make decisions regarding Albania. Since he is leaving for Calabria, and will return on Saturday, he insisted on bringing the matter up to date. (1) The Army, Navy, and Air Force continue their preparations. They will be ready on Saturday. (2) Jacomoni must, in the meantime, exert diplomatic pressure on the King, reporting its effects. (3) At a certain point, unless he gives up before this, we shall send

our ships into the territorial waters of Albania and present an ultimatum. (4) If he persists in his refusal we shall raise the tribes in revolt, publish our declarations, and land. (5) Having occupied Tirana, we shall gather the Albanian chiefs into a constituent assembly, over which I shall preside, and offer the crown of Albania to the King of Italy.

No one will protest. Not even Yugoslavia, which is too pre-occupied with recent events in Croatia. This evening I talked at length with Christic: I gave him ample assurances regarding Croatia, but made reservations regarding Albania. He offered no objections; he proposes, as a condition, that Albania shall not be used for an attack on Yugoslavia.

Badoglio<sup>88</sup> went to the Duce to say that he was in agreement with him on the Albanian undertaking; his only suggestion was that larger forces should be mobilized. We shall mobilize an additional division, and also a battalion of tanks.

MARCH 30, 1939. Jacomoni unexpectedly announced that he would arrive this afternoon. But because of engine trouble he has stopped at Brindisi and will arrive to-morrow.

Laval's speech is considered by everybody to be a stiffening of the French position. I told the Duce so by telephone. He answered: "So much the better; it was just what I desired."

I received Bombelles. He brought grave news from Croatia. The secession movement is spreading extremely fast. I do not as yet quite understand the real motives for his visit unless it is to make personal contact with Pavelic<sup>89</sup>, who was one of the most aggressive men in the country and has the means of carrying on a strong campaign in favour of Italy among the Croatian masses. I made a new appointment for Sunday, after having conferred with the Duce.

The tension between Germany and Poland which had become so alarming during the last few days seems now to be lessening. I am glad of it because a German move would

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<sup>88</sup> Marshal Pietro Badoglio: Marchese del Sabotino, Duke of Addis Ababa, Conqueror of Abyssinia. Anti-Fascist before the rise of Mussolini to power. Chief of General Staff, November, 1939. Resigned, December, 1940, and was succeeded by Gen. Cavallero. Appointed Premier after the fall of Mussolini. Resigned and was little more heard of after the capture of Rome by the Allies.

<sup>89</sup> Ante Pavelic: Croat Separatist leader. Head of the Ustasci (q.v.). Puppet ruler of Croatia.

have disastrous repercussions here. Poland enjoys a good deal of favour, and besides the Germans must not overdo things. It is now difficult to find anyone who has faith in their word. They would be completely discredited should they fail to carry out their pact of collaboration with Poland which they have reaffirmed over and over again.

Conference with Shiratori and Oshima who announce that they will present the proposals for the Alliance on the second of April.

MARCH 31, 1939. After a long series of more or less useless discussions with, among others, Spoleto<sup>90</sup> and Suardo,<sup>91</sup> I had a meeting with Pariani, Jacomoni, and Guzzoni,<sup>92</sup> who has been appointed commander of the expeditionary force in Albania. Jacomoni had no particular reasons for coming to Rome, except perhaps that by his absence he would introduce a little calm into the atmosphere of Tirana, which by this time is very disturbed. It would appear that the King has decided to refuse to sign a treaty which formally and substantially violates the integrity and sovereignty of Albania. Pariani said that he preferred such a determined attitude which permits a final settlement of the Albanian question. We studied the military plan of campaign and its close co-ordination with the diplomatic moves. It appears that this co-ordination is possible. But Jacomoni returned in the afternoon after his meeting with the military chiefs to give me his disquieting impressions regarding the organization of the expeditionary force. It appears that they cannot, by all their efforts, put together a battalion of trained motor-cycle troops, which could make a surprise arrival in Tirana. Unforeseen difficulties arise also with regard to the landing operations. In the meantime, news from Tirana confirms the fact that the King is preparing to resist—a matter which annoys me greatly, because I consider it rather dangerous to fire the first shot in this disturbed and

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<sup>90</sup> Duke of Spoleto: Cousin of King Victor Emmanuel and brother of the Duke of Aosta (q.v.). Married Princess Irene of Greece. In 1941 he was chosen "King" of Croatia with the name of Tomislav II, but he, prudently, never set foot in his kingdom.

<sup>91</sup> Count Suardo: President of the Senate.

<sup>92</sup> General Alfredo Guzzoni: Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War.

inflammable Europe. The Duce will arrive to-morrow afternoon, and until then his decisions cannot be altered. While waiting I instructed Jacomoni to prepare a draft treaty which in his opinion might be accepted by King Zog.

Charles<sup>93</sup> brought me the text of Chamberlain's declaration to the House of Commons on assistance to Poland. He also asks, as a personal matter, if he might inform London that Italy is ready to negotiate with France, if France will take the initiative. I reserve the right to answer after I have talked it over with the Duce. If it had not been for Daladier's speech I should have said yes without hesitation.

Wieniawa<sup>94</sup> talked about German-Polish relations. They hope for a peaceful solution, but if the Germans follow their usual unyielding procedure the Poles will fight. Wieniawa declared that he is sufficiently optimistic as to the resistance of the Polish armies.

APRIL 1, 1939. The Duce returned and I had a preliminary conference with him, Jacomoni present. He approved the outline of the treaty with some slight modifications, which are more matters of detail than of substance, but which will have the effect of saving the King's face. For an Oriental, this means a lot. We planned this line of action: to-morrow Jacomoni will appear before the King with a new outline of the treaty and will make it clear that the situation is now serious. Either he will accept, and in that case I will go to Tirana to attend the solemn ceremony of signing the treaty, naturally accompanied by a strong squadron of planes, which will be a symbol of the fact that Albania is Italian. Should he refuse, disorders will break out in all of Albania on Thursday, making armed intervention on our part an immediate necessity. In this case, we shall land on Friday morning.

During the afternoon Sereggi, the new Albanian Minister, came to see me. He begins his mission at a stormy time. Passing by Bari, he saw the concentration of troops and realized that the music was about to begin. I spoke frankly to him; in a friendly tone but quite firmly. He said that he was in agree-

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<sup>93</sup> Sir Noel Charles: Counsellor of the British Embassy in Rome. British Ambassador in Rome, 1945.

<sup>94</sup> General Boleslaw Wieniawa-Dlugoszowski: Polish Ambassador in Rome.

ment with us. He urged me to save appearances in such a way as to make the solution acceptable to the King and to the people. I accompanied him to the Palazzo Venezia, where the Duce repeated the warning in more precise terms. He added that if the King should refuse to sign the pact, a crisis will be unavoidable. Sereggi decided to leave for Tirana with Jacomoni, in order to persuade the King. Then, on the pretext that he was not able to exchange his Albanian money, he asked Jacomoni to lend him 15,000 lire, a first instalment on a bribe!

APRIL 2, 1939. Muti arrived in Rome, and I got ready to send him to Tirana with a small band of men as enterprising and boastful as himself, in order to create the incidents which are to take place next Thursday evening if the King, in the meantime, has not had the kindness to capitulate. I gave him freedom of action, but he is under definite orders: to respect the Queen and the child, if it is already born; to create terror during the night; at daybreak to hide in the woods and await the arrival of our troops, trying, in the meantime, to impede Zog's retreat toward Mati, where he might attempt some resistance.

I authorized Bombelles to make contact with Pavelic in a very secret way. As regards propaganda, I am thinking things over and shall soon come to a decision, although the Duce has already approved a subsidy to be given to the Croats.

I received von Mackensen, bringing to his attention the Duce's letter in answer to Chamberlain. I also received Shiratori, bearer of the Japanese answer about the Tripartite Alliance. In general this answer is good. It makes, however, two reservations: (1) to make known to London, Paris, and Washington that in the mind of the Japanese the Alliance is directed against Moscow; and (2) to add the declaration that, in case of a European war, Japanese aid would be limited. Agreed as far as the second is concerned. But with reference to the first, it seems to me that such a reservation might alter the value of the Pact, and I want to set this down clearly.

The reactions in the various capitals, including Belgrade, are mild. Christic, on the other hand, is more alarmed, but in answer to a question he declared himself convinced that the Albanian question cannot change the relations which happily exist between Rome and Belgrade. He recommended

that no action be taken without first informing Belgrade, and that somehow the existence of the Albanian State should be preserved as a matter of form.

Many contradictory news dispatches during the morning. Jacomoni telegraphed an Albanian counter-proposal presented before the Duce's ultimatum, but we did not take it into consideration. Sereggi telegraphed to offer his resignation. From Durazzo and Valona news arrived that the embarkation of Italian refugees is proceeding normally. Fortusi and the aviator Tesci, who arrived at noon from Tirana, said that the exodus of the Italians had filled the population with terror. They crowd the streets, weeping, and accusing King Zog of having brought this calamity upon them. The Duce telephoned the order for the embarkation, saying that the order for departure would come during the evening. At my suggestion he decided to carry out a demonstration flight by a hundred planes over Durazzo, Tirana, and Valona this afternoon.

4 p.m. A telegram arrived from Jacomoni. It appears that the King does not wish to take upon himself the responsibility for a complete capitulation, and intends to convoke the Council of Ministers to take the final decision of resisting or giving up. Quite justly, Jacomoni observed that, in this way, the King puts himself outside the terms of the ultimatum, but he agreed to transmit the information, none the less.

The Duce, whom I have informed, gave the order to launch the expedition, reserving the right to make public the news of its progress, if any.

From the telegraph offices we learn that long code messages are going from Tirana to the British Foreign Office. We cannot stop them. I gave orders, however, that they be delayed, and that many errors in the code groups be repeated. It is worth while gaining time, even though Chamberlain gave the House of Commons an account of what has happened which was very favourable to us, and has also declared that Great Britain has no specific interests in Albania.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Chamberlain made a statement to the House of Commons saying that the Government had given Poland an assurance of all possible support if Polish independence were clearly threatened. The French Government had authorized him to say that they held a similar position.

7 p.m. Jacomoni telegraphed saying that he was burning the secret code, that he had told the officials of the naval mission to leave, and that the entire Legation might have to get on the submarine which is at Durazzo. The Duce repeated the order to attack, while specifying that the Air Force must spare the cities and the civil population.

Badoglio has written a letter to the Duce criticizing the plan of operations. The Duce paid no attention to it. In a letter the King takes note of the communication made by the Duce yesterday, but expresses his doubts regarding the possibility of our installing ourselves solidly in Albania, basing his opinion on historical memories of the Venetians and the Aragonese. Evidently he does not remember that the Romans installed themselves there very well.

9 p.m. I communicated to Villani and to von Mackensen our decision to proceed with the military occupation. I received assurances from them both as to their solidarity and their absolute understanding of the motives which made us act. Subsequently I saw Christic. I acquainted him with the manoeuvres to create a crisis between us and Belgrade. I gave him the fullest assurance regarding the extent of our action and commitments. It seemed to me that he took it all with remarkable resignation. As he went out he said: "So Zog is coming to the same end as Benes."

At last Albanian proposals arrive. They would like to deal with Pariani. This is not possible, especially since Pariani is in Germany. We answered that eventually we shall send a plenipotentiary.

I returned home at about 10.30 p.m. I am tired and don't feel well. I should like to rest, especially since to-morrow I must make a flight in order to observe the landing of our forces. Nothing to be done about it.

At dawn Zog's son was born. How long will he be the heir to the Albanian throne?

APRIL 5, 1939. Two ships will go to Valona and Durazzo to evacuate the Italians, who are now seriously threatened by the bandits to whom Zog has given orders to start a reign of terror. For the time being international public opinion is calm, so calm that I suspect it does not realize the tension



between us and Zog and thinks Zog is going to appeal for help.

Germany, meanwhile, behaves well. Von Ribbentrop has communicated to Attolico that Berlin looks upon our action at Tirana with sympathy since any Italian victory represents a strengthening of the power of the Axis. Budapest has also reacted well. Villani informs me that six Hungarian divisions already mobilized are ready to go to the Yugoslav border at forty-eight hours' notice if it should be necessary to exert pressure on the Serbs.

I also saw Bombelles, who has had a satisfactory conference with Pavelic. He is now going to return to Zagreb, where he will speak with Matchek, then he will come back to Rome in order to take up the question of our financial contribution to the propaganda movement.

I saw the Duce several times. He is calm, frightfully calm, and more than ever convinced that no one will want to interfere in our affair with Albania. However, he has decided to march, and he will march even though all the world may be pitted against him. He repeated this aloud to Muti, who has hurried to Tirana and confirmed our impression that Zog will resist with the small forces which he has at his disposal. Inasmuch as the King requests twenty-four hours so that he can think the matter over, the Duce, through a personal telegram, fixed the expiration of the ultimatum for twelve o'clock Thursday, April 6th.

APRIL 6, 1939. Christic asked for another appointment. He seemed to want to say something urgent and serious to me. I was afraid that it was going to be a change in the policy of Yugoslavia. Instead, it was a question of new requests for clarification and for details about our action and our future programme. I tendered the olive branch. Christic himself, on telephoning to Belgrade, showed satisfaction over what I had said to him.

APRIL 7, 1939. I got up at 4 a.m. Starace was waiting for me in the entrance hall with many communications, among which was a telegram from Zog to the Duce. It confirmed his decision to arrive at a military understanding and asked for negotiations. We answered that he should send his negotiators to Guzzoni. The Duce, having got up during the night, which

is a very unusual thing, would like to have news and explanations that I am not in a position to give him because I have none.

The military attaché, Gabrielli, who in the last few days has behaved very strangely, telegraphs that Zog has at his disposal 45,000 men. I have the impression that he is exaggerating.

At 6 a.m. I left by plane. The weather is calm and warm. Buti,<sup>96</sup> Vitetti, and Pavolini<sup>97</sup> came with me. We were at Durazzo at 7.45. It was a beautiful spectacle. In the bay, motionless and solemn, were the warships, while motor-boats, lighters, and tugs moved in the port, transporting the landing forces. The sea was like a mirror. The countryside is green and the mountains, which are high and massive, are crowned with snow. We saw only a few people in Durazzo. But there must have been some resistance because I saw detachments of Bersaglieri, crouched behind piles of coal, defending the port, and I saw others going up the hill in Indian file in order to surround the city.

From some of the windows there was occasional firing. I continued to Tīrana. The streets were deserted and undefended. In the capital the crowd moved through the streets quite calmly. The Legation was barricaded. On the roof was a large Italian tricolour flag and in the court-yard many vehicles. I was convinced that in case of danger it would be easy to defend it from above and I gave orders to this effect.

I reported to the Duce, who was quite satisfied, particularly because international reaction was almost non-existent. The memorandum which Lord Perth left with me in the course of a cordial visit might have been composed in our own offices.

During the afternoon everything changed. Guzzoni received Zog's negotiators, and instead of proceeding as the Duce had ordered, suspended everything for six hours. The Duce was furious, because this delay might have serious consequences. It is necessary for us to arrive in the capital in order to carry out our political manœuvring. Through Valle, the Duce

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<sup>96</sup> Gino Buti: Director-General of Political Affairs in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1936. Minister Plenipotentiary, 1938. Special Envoy to Paris, 1941.

<sup>97</sup> Alessandro Pavolini: Succeeded Alfieri as Minister of Popular Culture, November, 1939. Shot with Mussolini.

ordered the march to be resumed, but meanwhile a day has been lost and this permits the usual mud-slinging French press to say that the Italians have been beaten by the Albanians. News about the advance of the columns is lacking. The only one who telegraphs is Jacomoni, who is hiding with other Italians in the Legation. The information he sends gives rise to more and more concern about its fate; the bandits are ransacking the royal palace and threaten the Legation. The Duce, in a very nervous state of mind, telephones continually during the night, demanding information which I am unable to give. Only in the early hours of the morning does Jacomoni indicate that the city has quieted down, but we do not know anything about Guzzoni's advance.

APRIL 8, 1939. D'Aieta<sup>98</sup> telephoned at eight o'clock in the morning, saying that Jacomoni gives every assurance that the airfield at Tirana is usable. I decided to leave immediately, and I informed the Duce, who approved. I arrived in Tirana at 10.30, after having flown over the armoured column, which is marching on the Albanian capital. The forward elements are already at the gates of the city. I found Valle, Guzzoni, and Jacomoni on the field, together with many units of airborne grenadiers. I must admit that a violent emotion has taken possession of me and of everybody else. I saw Guzzoni, who explained the reasons for the delay: landing difficulties, fuel not adaptable, and, finally, lack of communications, because the radio operators are not up to the mark. The situation is now excellent. I received many Albanian delegations which paid me homage. In reply I said that Italy will respect Albanian independence, ensuring her political development as well as the social and civil rights of the people.

With the news of Zog's flight to Greece vanish all our fears about resistance in the mountains. In fact, the soldiers are already returning to their barracks, after having deposited their arms in the garden of the Legation. I gave orders that the soldiers should be treated well, and especially the officers. I took some steps towards re-establishing order and the normal

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<sup>98</sup> Marquis Blasco Lanza D'Aieta: Italian diplomat. Chief of Cabinet at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1942-4. Counsellor to the Embassy at the Vatican, 1943. At one time Ciano's secretary.

rhythm of civilian life. I gave orders that all of Zog's political prisoners should be freed. These prisoners had been sentenced to one hundred years in gaol. I distributed money to the poor. I conferred with the leading citizens of Tirana, in order to get a definite idea of the wishes of the Albanians and also to make decisions regarding the new form of government to be given to the country. Mixing with the troops and their officers, I found them all very proud of the undertaking.

APRIL 9, 1939. I return to Rome to confer with and make a report to the Duce. Many Albanians greet me on the airfield with considerable cordiality. They give me Albanian flags and ask for Italian flags in return. This morning Tirana is decorated with Italian tricolour flags.

The Duce is happy. He listens attentively to my report and decides to send a congratulatory telegram to General Guzzoni. He really deserves it.

Regarding the new Albanian regime, the Duce has planned a regency, which does not seem good to me. I tell him so, and explain my plan as follows: to create at once a government council, and announce a Constitution by April 12th; to arrange for the voting of a decision which will sanction the union of the two countries, conferring on King Victor Emmanuel III the crown of Albania. In principle he approves. During the afternoon I draw up the document and discuss it with some jurists and other minor officials, such as Buti, Vitetti, *et al.* All agree that while such a decision will give us possession of Albania it will not look like aggression. This is useful, the more so because our tension with Great Britain appears to be decreasing after a conference I had this morning with Lord Perth; and the Yugoslavs behave in such a friendly way because of their boundless fear. The same may be said of the Greeks.

APRIL 10, 1939. We examine with the Duce the project drawn up yesterday, which is approved, except for a few minor variations in the wording. Programme: the announcement of the Constitution at Tirana on the 12th, the Grand Council in Rome on the 13th, my speech to the Chamber on the 15th, and Sunday, the 16th, a great national celebration of the event.

Reaction abroad begins to lessen. It is clear above all that

the British protests are more for domestic consumption than anything else.

News from Albania is good; military occupation is carried out according to plan and without obstacles.

APRIL 11, 1939. I got to work on the preparation of the speech for the Chamber. The protests of foreign countries have toned down; with to-morrow's ceremonies we shall give the democracies a good pretext to wash their hands of the whole affair, than which they ask for nothing better.

I communicated to Pignatti the Duce's decision to erect a mosque in Rome in view of the fact that 6,000,000 Italian subjects are now Mohammedans. After having spoken with Maglione, Pignatti reported to me that at the Vatican they are horror-struck at the idea, which they take to be contrary to Article 1 of the Concordat. But the Duce has made up his mind, and he is supported in this by the King, who always takes the lead in any anti-Church policy. Personally, I do not see any need for such a thing, and, at any rate, I would be more inclined to have this mosque constructed in Naples, since that city constitutes a veritable bridge with our African domains. In so far as this proposal concerns the Albanians, we realize that they are an atheistic people who would prefer a rise in salary to a mosque.

APRIL 12, 1939. I arrive at Tirana by plane at 10.30 and am received at the airport by members of the new Albanian Government. I did not know Verlaçi<sup>99</sup> and, had I known him, I should have opposed his nomination. He is a very surly-looking man and will give us a great deal of trouble. The crowd receives me triumphantly; there is a certain amount of coolness, especially among the high-school students. I see that they dislike raising their arms for the Roman salute, and there are some who openly refuse to do it even when their companions urge them.

However, things are not going so smoothly as it might appear. There is a great deal of opposition to union. All are in agreement on having a prince of the House of Savoy or, better still, they would like to have me. But they understand

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<sup>99</sup> Shefqhet Beg Verlaci: Albanian Prime Minister.

that giving the crown to Victor Emmanuel III means the end of Albanian independence. I have long discussions with many chiefs; the most stubborn are those from Scutari (who have been incited by the Catholic clergy). It will be easy to convince them, however, as soon as I distribute bundles of Albanian francs, which I have brought with me. Nevertheless, things go well during the meeting of the electoral body; there is a unanimous vote which is also very enthusiastic. They come as a delegation to bring me their decision. I speak from the balcony of the Legation, and am especially successful when I give assurance that the decision will prejudice neither the form nor substance of Albanian independence. Let it be understood that this success refers to the masses, because I see the eyes of some patriots flaming with anger and tears running down their faces. Independent Albania is no more.

APRIL 13, 1939. I return to Rome and go at once to the Palazzo Venezia. I find the Duce on the roof observing anti-aircraft experiments. I inform him of what has happened. He would like to go further at once and abolish the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Albania. I do not share his views. We must proceed gradually unless we want to antagonize the rest of the world. So far matters have run smoothly because we have not had to have recourse to force, but if to-morrow we should begin firing on the crowd, public opinion would become excited again. On the other hand, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is of use to us, since it will make the new regime acceptable without going through interminable legal arguments about its recognition. Later on it can be quickly suppressed. I propose to the chief of the Albanian Government the creation of an under-secretary for Albanian affairs and name Benini<sup>100</sup> as under-secretary. I want a technical expert because it will be necessary to carry out a programme of public works quickly. Only thus will we definitely link the people to us and destroy confidence in the authority of their chiefs, showing that only we are capable of doing what they have not been able to do or did not want to do themselves.

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<sup>100</sup> Zenone Benini: Under-Secretary for Albania, 1939. Sentenced in March, 1945, to 15 years' imprisonment.

During the evening a short session of the Grand Council for the approval of the decree.

APRIL 14, 1939. Council of Ministers. Then I work on my speech, which I send to the Duce in the late afternoon. He makes a few changes in it, then he describes it: "One of the best speeches that has ever been made in Parliament."

I receive the Yugoslav Minister. We reach an agreement on a meeting we are going to have in Venice with Markovic <sup>101</sup> on Saturday, the 22nd.

Goering arrives. I receive him at the station and accompany him to Villa Madama. On our way he dwells on the condition of the Axis, which he describes as formidable. He harshly attacks Poland.

APRIL 15, 1939. The Albanians have arrived. Some of them have a depressed air. The Duce received them at the Palazzo Venezia and addressed them. I noted that they listened anxiously for the word "independence", but this word did not come, and they were saddened. Jacomoni confirmed this later.

I made my speech<sup>102</sup> in the Chamber. It went over very well. Later there was a meeting of the Senate which was hurried and not very imposing.

Finally, a meeting with Goering and the Duce at the Palazzo Venezia. The record was preserved. Roosevelt has sent a message proposing a ten years' truce. At first the Duce refused to read it, then he defined it: "A result of infantile paralysis."

APRIL 16, 1939. The ceremony of offering the Albanian crown to the King of Italy takes place at the Royal Palace. The Albanians, who seem to be lost in the great halls of the Quirinal, have a depressed air. Verlaçi especially appears depressed as he pronounces, with a tired air and without conviction, the words he has to say in offering the crown. The King answers in an uncertain and trembling voice; he is certainly not an orator who makes any impression on an audience, and these

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<sup>101</sup> Alexander Cincina-Markovic: Minister for Foreign Affairs in Yugoslavia, 1939-41. Deposed by coup d'état and placed under house arrest, March, 1941.

<sup>102</sup> Ciano's speech was a justification of events in Albania. He complained of Albanian aggression and denied that any ultimatum had been presented to King Zog. He then praised the Italian military operations and criticized Great Britain for disapproving of them.

Albanians, who are a warrior mountain people, look with amazement and timidity on the little man who is seated on a great gilt chair beside which stands a gigantic bronze statue of Mussolini. They cannot understand what this is all about.

I talked to the Duce about the state of mind of the Albanians. He, too, was aware of it, and he assures me that he will talk to them to-day about their national independence and sovereignty in a way that will send them home reassured.

I have had two long conversations with Goering, one at the War Ministry and the other at the Palazzo Venezia. The second of these was recorded. Although he speaks a great deal about war, for which careful preparations are being made, yet it seems to me that he does not completely close the door to peace, at least for a few years. The thing that disturbs me most in his conversations is the tone in which he described relations with Poland; it reminds me peculiarly of the same tone used at other times for Austria and for Czechoslovakia. But the Germans are mistaken if they think they can act in the same way; Poland will undoubtedly be overrun, but the Poles will not lay down their arms without a hard fight.



## SECTION II

April 17, 1939—September 6, 1939

### *FORGING THE AXIS*

DEPARTURE of Goering—Teleki visits Rome for conversations—British raise difficulty of King of Italy's new title—Further postponement of signing of Tripartite Alliance—Hitler denounces naval pact with Britain and pact of friendship with Poland—Turkish anxiety about Italy's intentions—Sir Percy Loraine takes up his post as British Ambassador—Von Ribbentrop arrives at Milan—Albanians parade in Rome for the first time—Visit of Prince Paul of Yugoslavia—Proposal to form a Rumanian-Yugoslav-Bulgarian bloc against Turkey—Naval review—First plans for invasion of Greece—Mussolini's conversations with the American Ambassador—Conversations with Matchek, the Croatian leader—Ciano goes to Berlin—Pact with Germany signed—Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs closed—Italy to finance Croatian revolution—Mussolini attacks British attitude to Italy—Albanians receive the text of their constitution—Doubts about Italy's solvency—Arrival of Serrano Suñer—Conversations on Spain's policy—Death of Ciano's father—Ciano visits Spain—Germany preparing to attack Danzig—Hungary's adherence to the Axis—Proposed meeting between Hitler and Mussolini postponed—Ciano meets Ribbentrop and Hitler—Germany's poor opinion of Italy—Determination to wage war—Mussolini uncertain whether to break with Germany—Ciano visits Albania—He advises Mussolini to denounce pact with Germany—German-Russian pact signed—Unprepared state of Italian Army—Ciano's desire to avoid war—Italy negotiates with Britain and Germany—Germany attacks Poland—Britain declares war.

APRIL 17, 1939. I accompany Goering to the station. He is rather pleased with his stay in Rome, for it has given him contacts with me and with the Duce. Generally speaking, the impression is that even Germany intends to keep the peace. Only one danger: Poland. I was impressed not so much by what he said, but by the contemptuous tone he used in talking of Warsaw. The Germans should not think that in Poland they will make a triumphant entry as they have done elsewhere; if attacked, the Poles will fight. The Duce also sees it in this way.

APRIL 18, 1939. We received the Hungarians at the station. Teleki makes a good impression on the Duce; Czaky<sup>103</sup> is what he appears to be: a small, presumptuous man and, most disturbing to note, apparently a physical and spiritual weakling who wishes always to assume heroic airs.

The first meeting takes place in the afternoon. Nothing very extraordinary. Czaky expounds the situation in detail and tries to give his words an anti-German flavour. Above all, he keeps harping on Slovakia; he hopes—or, better, he deludes himself into thinking—that Germany might make a kind gift of it to Budapest.

It is useless to summarize the conversation since it was not important. In the Duce's words: "Only a bottle of wine was missing from the table."

We begin to draw up our plans of action in Albania with Benini. I think it will be successful since he is a man of action and is clear in his ideas and in his judgment. The Duce, too, was favourably impressed by him.

APRIL 19, 1939. The more or less useless conversations with the Hungarians are continuing. Czaky becomes more and more prolix and futile in his arguments. He specializes in saying the obvious, and in saying it as if it were a matter of great importance. Mussolini says of him that "he takes a long running start to jump over a straw".

Conversation with Perth. The British raise some difficulties connected with the title: King of Albania. Some lively arguments with Perth, in which I maintained that the change in the dynasty is a matter of internal affairs in which no one has a right to interfere.

APRIL 20, 1939. After the Duce had made his controversial speech regarding Roosevelt's message, I accompanied him to the Palazzo Venezia and showed him a very serious report from Attolico which announces imminent German action against Poland. This would mean war; we have the right therefore to be informed in good time. We must be able to prepare ourselves and we must prepare public opinion so that it will not be taken by surprise. I have therefore given

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<sup>103</sup> Count Czaky: Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

orders to Attolico to hasten my meeting with von Ribbentrop.

During the afternoon the third, and fortunately the last, conference with the Hungarians. That is to say with Czaky, because Teleki has scarcely opened his mouth. My impression of Czaky is more and more negative. To-day, in a very off-hand way, he declared that it was his conviction that Hitler is crazy. He bases this observation on the look of the Führer's eyes, and he said such absurdities with a great deal of assurance. We hope that this presumptuous individual will not be the Guido Schmidt<sup>104</sup> of Hungary. The Duce has summarized the situation: (1) Italy and Germany desire some years of peace and are doing all they can to preserve it. (2) Hungary is carrying on and will continue to carry on the policy of the Axis. (3) No one wants the partition of Yugoslavia, but everyone is working toward the maintenance of the status quo. If, however, any partition should come about, Italian interests in Croatia are paramount. (4) As to the Slovak problem, Hungary will adopt a watchful attitude and will do nothing contrary to German wishes.

APRIL 21, 1939. A day particularly devoted to Albania. I have a conference with Sthyka,<sup>105</sup> formerly Albanian Minister in Belgrade. He gives information especially regarding the problem of the Cayovesi,<sup>106</sup> 850,000 Albanians, strong, resolute and enthusiastic for a union with their mother country. It seems that the Serbs are in a panic over it. For the moment we must not even allow it to be imagined that the problem is attracting our attention; in fact we must give the Yugoslavs a dose of chloroform. Later on it will be necessary to adopt a policy of real interest in the Cayovo question; this will create an "Irredentist" problem in the Balkans that will absorb the attention of the Albanians themselves and will be a dagger thrust into the back of Yugoslavia.

In the afternoon a meeting of Ministers to pass the budget of the under-secretariat for Albania. It is fixed at 430,000,000

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<sup>104</sup> Guido Schmidt: German diplomat, formerly Austrian Cabinet Minister.

<sup>105</sup> Sthyka: Albanian Minister to Yugoslavia.

<sup>106</sup> Cayovesi: Albanian minority in the Balkans which Mussolini and Ciano thought might fulfil the same function as the Sudetenlanders in the German conquest of Czechoslovakia.

lire. Although I protested strongly against it, I am convinced that this sum will suffice.

A conference with Viola<sup>107</sup> to discuss my visit to Spain, which is to precede the visit that Goering will make there. It would make a bad impression on the Italians if that fellow should get there before us.

At the Palazzo Venezia I see Lord Perth. The Duce has treated him very courteously and seems to like him now. It has been decided that we will accept the credentials of his successor without the title of King of Albania.

APRIL 22, 1939. In Venice for the arrival of Markovic. The population gives me a cordial welcome. Evidently the Albanian question has had a particular echo in this great Adriatic city. Markovic makes a good impression on me. He is a kindly, temperate, and modest man. He has all the characteristics of the career diplomat. The arrival in Venice was a great event for him. This is the first time he has travelled abroad as a Minister. The applause, the flags, the bands, and an enchanted Venice full of sun and springtime have deeply moved him.

Our first meeting went very well. I immediately discovered him to be reasonable and understanding, though Indelli, who is always an alarmist, had given us the impression that the Yugoslavs were in a state of excitement. Even if this were true of some elements it has not reached responsible quarters. Our conversation touched on the following points:

Albania: acceptance of the fait accompli, including our reasons for sending troops and appreciation of our decision not to send troops in large numbers beyond Durazzo-Tirana to the north. On my part, assurances that we were disinterested in Kossov.

Germany: there will be closer and closer co-operation among the members of the Axis, without, for the moment, adhering to the anti-Comintern Pact for reasons of internal policy, but without at the same time destroying all possibility of such adherence.

Yugoslavia: refusal of any kind of British guarantee. Policy of disarmed neutrality with the economic support of Italy and

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<sup>107</sup> Count Guido Viola di Campalto: Italian Ambassador to Spain.

Germany; naturally, within the system of the Axis and gravitating principally to Rome.

Hungary: gradual bettering of relations in order not to compromise our existing obligations to Rumania, about which Markovic has made open and sharp criticism.

League of Nations: progressive indifference.

In general the visit has produced excellent results. The communiqué issued at the end of the conversation has pleased our journalists and has very much displeased the Franco-British journalists, which is a proof of its excellence. Markovic has made a good impression on everyone who has met him; Stoyadinovich has been liked even more, perhaps because he is more modest and is more physically attractive. Markovic is very careful to hide the great expanse of his bald pate, and to this end he mobilizes all the hair of his temples and of the nape of his neck. He said that his hairs are like the mobilized Yugoslavs in the Albanian crisis.

After my return to Rome I make a report to the Duce, who is quite satisfied. Jacomoni, in accordance with a request from me, has confirmed the agreement for the equality of civil and political rights of Italians and Albanians. The matter is very important, in fact as important as the annexation itself.

APRIL 24, 1939. I received numerous diplomats, notably the Polish Ambassador, who complains about attacks in our press against articles appearing in Warsaw opposition newspapers. He finds such stuff not worth bothering about; perhaps he is right.

The Netherlands Minister, a good, vague gentleman, whom I rarely see, comes to spin me a strange yarn. He says that he is very much alarmed over what is happening in Europe and above all about what people are whispering is yet to happen. Certain officers have told him that we and the Germans have decided to divide Europe between us; Holland would belong to Germany. He asked me how much truth there was in all this. I answered him jokingly, and then I reported the conversation to the Duce, who was very much amused. They are the ideas of an official who is a little stupid and very timid, but they are none the less indicative of a state of mind spreading over the world.

Starace and Benini on their return from Tirana say they are enthusiastic over all they have seen, and admit that Albania is in a far more satisfactory condition than they had thought.

I go to the theatre, where *Cesare*, by Forzano,<sup>108</sup> is being given. The Duce is also there. He himself collaborated in the work, and some years ago, through me, he sent Forzano the opera's scenario. Frankly, I think this opera is ugly, without originality and without technique. It affords neither pleasure nor interest. Besides, adulation is an art which one must practise with control. He has let everything get out of hand, and the results are anything but those he wanted to produce.

APRIL 25, 1939. From Berlin comes the news that the Japanese still maintain their reserve with reference to the Tripartite Alliance; hence the signature is to be postponed sine die. Mussolini, whom I telephoned at Forli, where he happens to be to-day, declares that he is satisfied. In reality, for some time past he has considered Japanese participation more harmful than useful. I shall see von Ribbentrop on May 6th in some city in northern Italy in order to discuss common policies.

François-Poncet uses the pretext of a commercial agreement to talk to me of Italo-French relations. He says he has been informed by Lord Perth as to what the Duce said about negotiations begun with Baudouin and later interrupted. He wants us to know that the French Government is always ready to continue discussions on this basis. I make sweeping reservations, but at his request I add that I do not consider anything changed in our general policy. In turn I ask him if I must consider this démarche as official. He tells me that he has made it on the authorization of his Government.

APRIL 26, 1939. I report to the Duce by telephone on my conversation with François-Poncet. He does not appear to attach much importance to it. He says: "Anyway, I have no intention of starting negotiations with France until after the signing of the treaty with Germany." I received many foreign

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<sup>108</sup> Giovacchino Forzano: Italian playwright, wrote "Julius Caesar" with Mussolini, was on the staff of the "Nazione" in Florence. Arrested in 1945. On this occasion Forzano evidently went too far in identifying the Duce with Caesar.

diplomats; they are all flabbergasted by our foreign policy and all of them, including the more pessimistic, like Helfand,<sup>109</sup> who is a professional Cassandra, admit that our successes have been greater than could have been thought possible.

We decide on certain important works in Albania, among them the construction of hotels in the larger centres, and for these the Duce gives a personal contribution of a million lire.

The British Chargé d'Affaires sends me a brief résumé of all that Mr. Chamberlain is planning to tell the House of Commons with regard to military conscription. The project seems to me of very modest proportions.

APRIL 27, 1939. Nothing new except a conference with the Japanese Ambassador, who says that the last word about Japan's decisions on the Tripartite Pact has not yet been said. However, I stress the point that we must know before May 6th.

From Berlin they informed me that the Führer in his speech to-morrow will denounce the Naval Pact with Great Britain as well as the pact of friendship with Poland. This is very serious. The situation which during the past few days has been quite clear may become very obscure from one hour to the next. The Duce, to whom I transmitted the information at Rocca delle Caminate<sup>110</sup>, has telephoned for more particulars. He, too, does not hide his concern about the denunciation of the pact with Poland. On the other hand, the situation is less alarming as regards the Naval Pact with Great Britain.

APRIL 28, 1939. The Führer has delivered his speech. It lasted exactly two hours and twenty minutes; it cannot be said that brevity is Hitler's most noticeable characteristic. Generally speaking, the speech is less bellicose than one might have supposed on the basis of information coming to us from Berlin. The first reactions to the speech in the different capitals are also rather mild. Every word which leaves any hope of peaceful intentions is received by the whole of humanity with immeasurable joy. No nation wants war to-day; the most that

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<sup>109</sup> Leon Helfand: Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Rome.

<sup>110</sup> Rocca delle Caminate. A castle-villa in the Apennines, 1200 feet up, reconstructed by the Fascist Party and offered to Mussolini as a gift. It is not far from Forlì, and near Mussolini's birthplace.

one can say is that they know it is inevitable. This is worth a lot to us and to the Germans. As for the others, I do not know. I ask myself seriously whether a German move against Poland, notwithstanding the many declarations and mutual guarantees, would not, in the end, lead to a new Munich. On the other hand, a Franco-British war against a Germany on the defensive on its western frontier is practically an impossible one.

I received news from Japan. It appears that they have now decided to sign the Alliance. I tell Shiratori that it is necessary in any case to have a yes or no quickly. In a few days I shall meet Ribbentrop and we must make our decisions, especially since the diplomatic activity of the democracies has been greatly intensified in the last few days, while the Anglo-Soviet alliance seems now to be a concrete and accomplished fact.

The Duce returns to Rome.

APRIL 29, 1939. Council of Ministers. Some decisions are approved to increase the power of the armed forces. The Duce is very much dissatisfied with them, with the exception of the Navy. He feels, and rightly so, that beyond appearances, which are more or less carefully kept up, there is little underneath. I think so too. I have no exact information as to the Army, but the many rumours which I hear are distinctly pessimistic. Also, some impressions which I formed on the occasion of the mobilization for the Albanian undertaking, which was after all a small mobilization, have increased my doubts. The military make great play with a lot of names. They multiply the number of divisions, but in reality these are so small that they scarcely have more than the strength of regiments. The ammunition depots are short of ammunition. Artillery is outmoded. Our anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons are altogether lacking. There has been a good deal of bluffing in the military sphere, and even the Duce himself has been deceived—a tragic bluff. We will not talk about the question of the Air Force. Valle states that there are 3,006 first-line planes, while the Navy information service says that there are only 982. A gross exaggeration. I report the matter to the Duce. I believe that it is my duty to speak with absolute honesty about such a matter, even though it makes him bitter. This will serve to avoid greater sorrow in the future.



APRIL 30, 1939. The Duce is furious because of the photograph taken of the Grenadiers presenting arms on the arrival of General Brauchitsch. He is right, for it would be difficult to find anything worse done. The Duce sees in this an indication of the lack of discipline in the Army. He explains it by saying that the Army was at one time the exclusive property of the Italian monarchy, and its main function was that of a subsidiary police force for the preservation of public order; to-day, on the other hand, its main business is to wage war. This confuses many officers.

I discussed with Alfieri the advisability of accepting the title of Prince of Kruia which the Albanians would like to bestow on me. This would be the first and only thanks received so far for having given Albania to Italy. Nevertheless, my inclination is to refuse it.

I had my first conversation with Gafencu.<sup>111</sup> He is a likeable man, a little timid, but quite clever. We explore the situation. I do not conceal my disappointment over Rumania's acceptance of the British guarantee. What purpose would it serve if Hungary or Bulgaria attacked? He talks about relations with Budapest and stresses the uncompromising attitude of the Magyars. I agree with him on this point; the Hungarians are always absurdly insistent. I don't like their attitude toward us either. They condescend to accept favours which they first solicit. Gafencu talks also about our relations with France. He knows about my last conversation with François-Poncet. He says that Bonnet's tendency is for conciliation; Leger's<sup>112</sup> is to wait until we take the initiative. They certainly have a long time to wait.

MAY 1, 1939. The ceremony at the Royal Palace of submitting a reply to the King's speech at the opening session of the Fascist Chamber. The Duce criticizes the eighteenth-century character of the ceremony, the use of gala carriages, etc., and says this is the last time it is going to happen so.

Gafencu is received by the Duce. The conversation starts off rather coldly. At heart Mussolini is prejudiced against the Rumanians, whom he despises as soldiers. Then he allows

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<sup>111</sup> Grigore Gafencu: Rumanian politician, Minister for Foreign Affairs; later Rumanian Ambassador to Moscow during the period of Russo-German collaboration.

<sup>112</sup> Alexis Leger: French Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1939-40.

himself to be carried away by his love for discussion and polemics. He openly criticizes the Rumanian acceptance of the British guarantee; as a result Rumania assumes the role of a protected country. Gafencu explains the reasons that have induced him to accept it; above all the pressure of public opinion, which has been greatly concerned over German territorial demands for Lebensraum. We continue to explore the general political situation; nothing particularly interesting results.

In the afternoon I have a long conference with Christic. He is concerned about a possible German-Polish crisis during Prince Paul's stay in Rome. I reassure him, giving him some information about my meeting with von Ribbentrop, which will take place during the week.

Von Mackensen in Rome and Attolico from Berlin tell me of Turkish anxiety about our intentions. They suggest our giving the Turks sufficient reassurance to calm them. Mussolini, to whom I refer the matter, approves but says: "This is the fruit of a bad conscience. They deserve an act of aggression because of the mere fact that they fear one."

MAY 2, 1939. General Carboni,<sup>113</sup> who has the reputation of being a deep student of military matters, to-day confirms the reports that our armament situation is disastrous. I have received this information from too many sources not to take it seriously. But what is the Duce doing? His attention seems to be devoted mostly to matters of drill; there is trouble if the "present arms" is not done correctly, or if an officer doesn't know how to do the goose step, but he seems little concerned about the real weaknesses, of which he certainly is very well aware. In spite of my formal charges in connection with the results of Cavagnari's investigation of the efficiency of our Air Force he has done nothing, absolutely nothing; and to-day in his conversation with Cavagnari he didn't even mention the matter. Why? Does he fear the truth so much that he is unwilling to listen?

I received Bombelles. After what has been happening in Yugoslavia we have no intention of doing anything that might

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<sup>113</sup> General Carboni: Member of the Italian General Staff.

weaken the unity of the State. On the other hand, it is not clear what the Croats are doing. It appears that agreement with the Serbs has been reached. Therefore, I fully confirmed all that I had said in previous conversations regarding our active interest in the destinies of Croatia, but I said that for the moment I intended to do nothing.

My last meeting with Gafencu. We have become decidedly good friends. He invites me to Bucharest in October, which is all very well, but might it not be that by October many plans will have to be changed?

MAY 3, 1939. To calm Turkish apprehensions with regard to us and above all to please the Germans, who consider a counter-mancœuvre on the part of Great Britain and France as possible, I have given the Turkish Ambassador assurances to the effect that Italy has neither economic, political, nor territorial aims with respect to his country. The Ambassador was well satisfied with these statements. This was obvious, in spite of his efforts to hide his feelings.

Have made arrangements with Parenti so that the arrival of von Ribbentrop in Rome will be marked by particular solemnity. This is necessary in order to dispel the rumours appearing in foreign papers of the strong and clamorous opposition of the citizens of Milan to Axis policies.

I receive Sir Percy Loraine,<sup>114</sup> the new British Ambassador. Our conversation is purely conventional and therefore dull. However, Loraine made a good impression upon me. In my opinion he is a naturally timid man. He is very much worried about the environment in which he is to carry on his mission. Rome, for a foreign diplomat, is a difficult post; but this is particularly true for an Englishman, who finds himself in an ambiguous situation. He must put on the appearance of formal friendship but in reality carry out a policy which is hostile towards us. Lord Perth had adapted himself so as to fit and interpret our point of view. Will Loraine do the same? It is possible.

MAY 4, 1939. I remained at home because I did not feel well. The Duce writes down some instructions for the

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<sup>114</sup> Sir Percy Loraine: Succeeded Lord Perth as British Ambassador in Rome after holding diplomatic posts in Athens and Cairo.

conversation with Ribbentrop, and sends me his notes. He emphasizes the necessity for a peaceful policy.

MAY 5, 1939. Many conversations, but none of any particular interest except one with the Japanese Ambassador. The final draft of the Tripartite Pact has been communicated to Arita in Tokyo. Ribbentrop is dissatisfied with it. But the Ambassador tells me it is difficult to go any further, and that we are now near the breaking-point.

A speech by Beck. It is hard to judge it from the short résumés in our possession. It does not seem aggressive or unyielding. But they are not satisfied in Berlin. The conversation with Ribbentrop will take place in Milan rather than Como. This is what the Duce wanted in order to refute the French rumour about a violent anti-German demonstration in Milan. In the evening I leave for Milan.

MAY 6, 1939. Milan's welcome to von Ribbentrop dispels the legend which had been spread by the usual police informers that northern Italy was deeply anti-German. The Milanese population is very much flattered that their city should have been chosen as the scene for an important event, and has shown considerable enthusiasm. I myself was surprised, not at the demonstration itself, but at the proportions it assumed.

I have had stenographic notes taken of my conversations with von Ribbentrop.

Some comments: For the first time I found my German colleague in a pleasantly calm state of mind. He did not, as usual, do a great deal of boasting. Rather, he has made himself the standard-bearer of a policy of moderation and understanding. Naturally, he said that during the next few years we must go to this place, and take that place, but the slowing down of German aggression is a very significant symptom.

The Alliance, or rather the immediate announcement of the Alliance, was decided on Saturday evening immediately after dinner at the Continental, following a telephone call from the Duce. After the conversation I reported to Mussolini the satisfactory consequences from our point of view.

MAY 7, 1939. Mussolini, when he has obtained something, always asks for more; and he has asked me to make a public announcement of the bilateral pact, which he has always

preferred to the triangular alliance. Von Ribbentrop, who at the bottom of his heart has always preferred the inclusion of Japan in the Pact, at first hesitated, but then yielded, pending Hitler's approval of the proposal.

Hitler, when reached by telephone, gave his immediate approval, and has personally collaborated in drafting the agreement. When I informed the Duce on Sunday morning he expressed particular satisfaction.

Von Ribbentrop had a fair personal success, even in that useless and snobbish world of so-called society—indispensable when one has to give a dinner. The men who accompanied von Ribbentrop are also liked by those with whom they come in contact. They are not the usual wooden and somewhat boring Germans; they are likable young men, who speak foreign languages well, and who, in a drawing-room, are able to forget all their heel-clicking when addressing a lady.

MAY 8, 1939. I returned to Rome. Starace is very pleased about what I had to say to him on the state of mind of the Milanese. The Duce, too, is pleased by what has happened.

I received Christic, whom I told about the official meeting, and also Helfand, to whom I emphasized the fact that the Pact, as drafted, has no anti-Russian character. I tried to facilitate the exchange of Russian prisoners held as hostages by Franco.

MAY 9, 1939. Review of troops in the Via dell'Impero. The Albanians paraded in Rome for the first time; I confess that this moved me. In the afternoon the sittings of the Roman Curia are resumed; the arrangements are entrusted to the Senate. My father<sup>115</sup> protested against this, recalling that the Senate was the very body which opposed Cæsar, and that Cæsar was killed between those walls.

Conversation with von Brauchitsch. He, too, like all the Germans, is talking about peace.

Conversation with Shiratori, who was very much impressed by our Treaty of Alliance with Berlin. I hope that Tokyo will wake up in time to join. I doubt it.

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<sup>115</sup> Admiral Costanzo Ciano, Count of Buccari: Father of Galeazzo Ciano, who tended to hero-worship him for his not too well authenticated exploits in the 1914-8 war. A senior Fascist who, according to Ciano, had been chosen by Mussolini to be his successor. See later Ciano's highly emotional account of his death.

MAY 10, 1939. Paul of Yugoslavia arrives. The Duce, as always at such ceremonies when the subject of monarchy comes up, was critical, saying the monarchy was the sworn enemy of the regime. He is of the opinion that a manifesto would be enough to get rid of it. Some day he thinks he will do it.

At the Palazzo Venezia there is a meeting between the Duce, myself, and Markovic. Nothing new in regard to the direct relations between Rome and Belgrade. The points settled at the meeting in Venice have all been confirmed. But a new factor is the definite position taken by Yugoslavia against Turkey and the proposal to form a Rumanian-Yugoslav-Bulgarian bloc for the purpose of opposing Turkey. In order to achieve this, an agreement between the Magyars and Rumanians is necessary. All this is quite interesting.

A conversation with Poncet at his request. He came to tell me that the French Government is pleased that we are still disposed to negotiate on the basis of Baudouin's proposals. But while exploring the matter he tried to save what he could in the usual French way, especially as regards Tunis. I immediately asked him not to change the terms now, as this would upset all prospects of success. And, very cleverly, he quickly drew in his horns. I cannot say if this deal will come to any conclusion, but I do know that François-Poncet has become a different person. His ideas on Italy and on the regime have become clearer, and perhaps he has also changed his ideas in general. He tells me that he now detests freedom of the press, and that he is coming closer and closer to totalitarian ideas.

MAY 11, 1939. Naval review. While at sea I had a long conversation with the Regent Paul. He is very much concerned about the threats of war, and I believe that up to a point he has confidence in my assurances of peace. He tried to give me some explanations regarding Stoyadinovich. Quite apart from the weakening of the Government, which took place during the time Stoyadinovich's Party had a parliamentary majority, Stoyadinovich had discredited himself by shady business speculations, carried on partly by him and partly by his satellites. It seems that he has been able to accumulate, especially in foreign countries, very considerable sums of money.

Paul also hinted at the possibility of a lawsuit. I advised him against it, but would not swear that my words had any effect. The Duce, to whom I told these things, commented that this mania for wealth is a kind of disease. Otherwise it could not be explained, particularly because man's capacity to enjoy himself has a limit beyond which gold becomes an obstacle. Besides, as a kind of vengeance wreaked by fate, it is the richest men who can least enjoy their wealth; Rockefeller was obliged to live on milk and oranges during the last sixteen years of his life.

The King, on board ship, expressed his belief that Corsica must inevitably become Italian when the great crisis comes in Europe. The Duce, at dinner at the Quirinal, spoke with some diplomats. Nothing special except a warning to Greece because she had accepted the Franco-British guarantee. He used some harsh words even to Ruegger<sup>116</sup> because of the attitude of the Swiss press.

MAY 12, 1939. This morning I found the Duce very nervous and concerned about the international situation. I believe that Daladier's speech, which was needlessly stubborn, has contributed to his state of mind. He told me that this speech invalidates my conversations with Poncet, and that therefore I should forget about them. On Yugoslavia he has also many reservations; as proof of the sincerity of their attitude he would like a definite gesture, such as their withdrawing from the League of Nations. I think this is premature, and also that we must take into account the difficulties which still exist in that country.

The Duce is also disturbed about Bulgaria; he instructed me to send a telegram to Talamo to sound out the real intentions of the Government. The proper place for Bulgaria is in the Axis fold, but I believe that we must make still more efforts to convince that trembling king of this more than obvious truth.

There was a bit of a storm in intellectual circles in Albania, which explains why twenty or so persons will immediately be sent to concentration camps. There must not be the least sign of weakness; justice and force must be the characteristics of

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<sup>116</sup> Paul Ruegger: Swiss Minister to Italy.

the new regime. Public works are starting well. The roads are all planned in such a way as to lead to the Greek border. This plan was ordered by the Duce, who is thinking more and more of attacking Greece at the first opportunity.

MAY 13, 1939. Departure for Florence with the Yugoslavs. While on the train the German scheme for the Alliance is handed to me. In general it is acceptable. We should, however, like to add a clause regarding frontiers to be perpetually guaranteed, lebensraum for Italy, and the duration of the Pact. I have never read such a Pact; it contains some real dynamite.

Welcome in Florence was curtailed because of a downpour which has lasted for hours and hours. I speak with Markovic about the problem of Yugoslavia's remaining at Geneva. He still offers some resistance, but he realizes the advisability of deserting the Geneva mausoleum. I believe he will end by accepting our advice.

MAY 14, 1939. Von Ribbentrop makes still another attempt to add to the signatories of the Alliance by turning it into a tripartite pact with Japan. I offer no objections, although I am thoroughly sceptical about the possibility and also the usefulness of this.

The Duce makes a very fine speech at Turin. He is calm in his delivery but emphatic in the substance of his speech. He then telephones me. We have our last discussion about the signing of the Alliance. The Germans propose that I go to Berlin from May 21st to 24th. I ask that the time be delayed or advanced. It does not seem to me that May 24th<sup>117</sup> is the most appropriate date to sign such a formidable military alliance with the Germans.

MAY 15, 1939. I return to Rome. The Yugoslav visit went well even though nothing new was decided. The Turkish threat is what particularly concerns Belgrade; we must take advantage of this psychological condition to pull the Yugoslavs more and more into the orbit of the Axis.

Useless conversation with the Belgian Ambassador.

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<sup>117</sup> May 24th was the anniversary of Italy's entry into the 1914-18 War on the side of the Allies against the Central Powers. Hitler had a strange mania for date coincidences, e.g. the invasion of Russia on the anniversary of Napoleon's invasion.



Conversation with Wieniawa. He had asked to see me several days ago. Beck had been informed by Valentino of our complete solidarity with the Germans in case of war. Wieniawa is pessimistic; he believes war is inevitable. Besides, he has no desire to remain in Rome under these conditions; he has asked to be recalled. After our official conversation was finished we spoke as friend to friend, and I advised him to be reasonable. Whatever happens, Poland will pay the price of the conflict. Because there are two alternatives: either the Axis wins and Germany will absorb Poland, or the Axis loses and Poland becomes a province of Russia. No Franco-British help is possible, at least in the beginning of the war; Poland would be soon reduced to a heap of rubble. Wieniawa admits that I am right on many points, but he has faith in an ultimate success which would give new power to Poland. I fear that this illusion of his, unfortunately, is shared by too many of his countrymen.

I inform Villani about the conversations with the Yugoslavs. Especially of the idea of a quadripartite treaty against the Turks.

MAY 16, 1939. Nothing new.

MAY 17, 1939. The American Ambassador<sup>118</sup> is very anxious to explain to me a conversation which the Duce had with him some days ago at the Quirinal. He is particularly resentful because Mussolini said that America is in the hands of the Jews. He wanted to deny this, but used very weak arguments. He stressed one point, namely that the American people, who originated in Europe, have all made up their minds to concern themselves in European affairs, and it would be foolish to think that they would remain aloof in the event of a conflict. I reported this to the Duce, who did not seem to be very much alarmed.

During the afternoon I received Alessandri,<sup>119</sup> ex-President of Chile and a good friend of Italy. He has been defeated by a popular-front coalition, but he considers the Red regime to be ill-suited to his country, and foresees, he says with horror, that he will be recalled to power. Like all Americans he is

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<sup>118</sup> William Phillips: American Ambassador to Italy.

<sup>119</sup> Arturo Alessandri: Former President of Chile.

anxious about the international situation, and imagines there may be a formula that will have the magic power to stifle all controversies.

Mussolini approves the final Pact of Alliance, and authorizes the bestowal of the Order of the Annunziata on von Ribbentrop. He says, too, that he is preparing an exchange of telegrams between the King and the Führer in order "to prevent the usual malicious interpretations in the French press".

MAY 18, 1939. Christic thanks me for the courtesies accorded to the Regent Paul, and to Markovic, and asks for information regarding the Bulgarian attitude. I let him examine Talamo's telegram, which states that Bulgaria is ready to align itself with the Axis, provided Yugoslavia does likewise and guarantees Bulgaria against Rumania. In Belgrade they are increasingly concerned over the enigmatic Turkish policy, and are trying to create a Slav bloc of an anti-Turkish character. This is what we also desire.

I see Irabo<sup>120</sup> and he brings me an album of photographs of Ruthenia. When I ask him he affirms that Hungary is already in a position to beat Rumania. She only needs heavy artillery.

Guzzoni and Messe<sup>121</sup> send excellent news about the situation in Albania. I come to the conclusion that we should effect the total absorption of the Albanian armed forces.

Carnelutti,<sup>122</sup> sent by Matchek, wants information as to our conversations with and commitments to the Regent Paul. Nothing is changed on our part, since Belgrade has not formally adhered to the Axis. Then he informs me: (1) Matchek no longer intends to come to any agreement with Belgrade; (2) he will continue his separatist movement; (3) he asks for a loan of 20,000,000 dinars; (4) within six months, at our request, he will be ready to start an uprising. I make an appointment with him for when I return from Germany in order to continue our negotiations.

MAY 19, 1939. Nothing particularly important.

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<sup>120</sup> Irabo: Agent of the Slovaks.

<sup>121</sup> General Giovanni Messe: Italian Chief of Staff in last stages of the war; made prisoner-of-war in Tunis.

<sup>122</sup> Carnelutti: Special envoy from the Croatian Agrarian leader, Matchek. An engineer of Italian origin.

MAY 20, 1939. Departure for Berlin. During my trip I speak with Mastromattei, the prefect of Bolzano, to whom I show the text of the Treaty. He states that the preamble with its recognition of existing frontiers will strike a great blow at the irredentism of the Alto Adige.

MAY 21, 1939. I arrive in Berlin. There are great demonstrations, clearly spontaneous in their warmth. My first discussion with Ribbentrop. Nothing has changed in regard to what was said and decided upon in Milan. He repeats Germany's interest in and intention to ensure for herself a long period of peace—at least three years. He dwells on the desirability of binding Japan to our system. He maintains that Russia is too weak to give much help to the Western democracies even if she should take her stand with them. He speaks also of the Turkish situation. He has been influenced by the suggestions of the superficial von Papen, and so he believes that the Turkish attitude has been determined by fear of Italy. I proved to him with original Turkish documents, intercepted by our secret service, that Turkish hostility is also directed against Germany. Finally, I talked to him about Yugoslavia. I tell him that our conversations in Rome have not been really satisfactory, even if they appear to be so. I declare that we shall not take the initiative in anti-Yugoslav movements so long as Belgrade adopts a correct policy toward the Axis, but that we shall immediately revise our position if Belgrade leans towards the democracies. I go on to say that an internal revolt in Croatia would not leave us indifferent. Ribbentrop approves, but I can see that he really prefers to maintain the Yugoslav status quo. Himmler, on the other hand, tells me definitely that we must hurry and establish our protectorate over Croatia.

We have more or less the same discussion with the Führer. He states that he is very well satisfied with the Pact and confirms the fact that Mediterranean policy will be directed by Italy. He takes an interest in Albania and is enthusiastic about our programme for making of Albania a stronghold which will inexorably dominate the Balkans.

I found Hitler very well, quite serene, less aggressive. A little older. His eyes are more deeply wrinkled. He sleeps very little. In fact less and less. And he spends a great part of the night

surrounded by colleagues and friends. Frau Goebbels, who is a constant member of these gatherings and who feels very honoured by them, was describing them to me without being able to conceal a vague feeling of boredom on account of their monotony. It is always Hitler who talks! He can be Führer as much as he likes, but he always repeats himself and bores his guests. For the first time I hear hints, in the inner circles, of the Führer's affection for a beautiful girl. She is twenty years old with beautiful quiet eyes, regular features, and a magnificent body. Her name is Sigrîd von Lappus. They see each other frequently and intimately.

The ceremony for the signature of the Pact was very solemn and the Führer was sincerely moved.

Goering, whose standing remains very high, but whose star is no longer in the ascendant, had tears in his eyes when he saw the collar of the Annunziata around Ribbentrop's neck.

Von Mackensen told me that Goering had made a scene, complaining that the collar really belonged to him, since he was the true and only promoter of the Alliance. I promised Mackensen that I would try to get Goering a collar.

Himmler talked at length about relations with the Church. They like the new Pope and believe that a *modus vivendi* is possible. I encouraged him along these lines, saying that an agreement between the Reich and the Vatican would make the Axis more popular.

Ribbentrop is making a name for himself. In speaking of him to Signora Attolico, Hitler said: "Whatever else may be said about him, it must be admitted that this man has a swelled head."

MAY 24, 1939. Return to Rome.

At the station all important Fascist officials and a considerable crowd welcome me on my arrival with warm demonstrations. However, it is clear to me that the Pact is better liked in Germany than in Italy. Here we are convinced of its usefulness and hence accept it as a matter of course. The Germans, on the other hand, put into it a warmth of feeling which we lack. We must recognize that hatred for France has not yet been successful in arousing love for Germany.

At the station Anfuso<sup>123</sup> hands me a telegram from the King. I learn afterwards from the Duce that he had thought of conferring upon me the title of marquis, but that he had been very wisely advised against it by the Duce himself. He considered that it would not be helpful to me because of the disapproval it would arouse in the great Fascist masses. The Duce had suggested the sending of the telegram to greet me.

I reported to Mussolini on the details and impressions of my visit to Germany. I find him quite satisfied, and, what is most unusual, he repeatedly expressed his satisfaction. Then he went on to speak of Yugoslavia. He was more than ever distrustful of her, and he authorized me to strengthen Matchek's movement by timely financial aid.

MAY 25, 1939. I thank the King for the telegram. He answers: "From 1900 to the present time I have never sent a telegram to a Minister. I believed that it would be worth while to break a tradition in order to express my own deep feelings." He then quickly made a jibe at the Germans: "As long as the Germans have need of us they will be courteous, and even servile, but at the first opportunity they will reveal themselves as the great rascals they really are." He recalls certain bitter contacts that he had with them on the occasion of one of his visits in 1893, and he does not think that things have changed since that time.

A long conference with the Duce. He is increasingly anti-Yugoslav, anti-Greek. We decide to close the Albanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and to remove foreign diplomats from Tirana. He is thinking also of denouncing the London Pact in consequence of the Anglo-Turkish accord. He will bring the subject up next Saturday on the occasion of Percy Loraine's presentation. The King has made a strange prophecy with unusual confidence: "The day will come," he said, "when Italy and Germany will come to an agreement with Great Britain. Then peace and progress will really be assured." There is no doubt that the King is anti-German, but it is likewise certain that he detests and scorns the French with profound conviction.

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<sup>123</sup> Filippo Anfuso: One of Ciano's secretaries. Minister to Hungary.

The Duce attacks the monarchy and says: "I envy Hitler, who need not drag along with him so many empty baggage cars."

MAY 26, 1939. A meeting with Carnelutti, who has just returned from Zagreb. He confirms Matchek's full decision to turn down every agreement with Belgrade. We agreed and embodied in a memorandum the following points: (1) Italy will finance Matchek's Croat revolt with 20,000,000 dinars; (2) he undertakes to prepare the revolution within four to six months; (3) he will quickly call in the Italian troops to restore order and peace; (4) Croatia will proclaim herself an independent State in confederation with Rome. It will have its own Government but its Ministries for foreign affairs and national defence will be merged with ours; (5) Italy will be permitted to keep armed forces in Croatia and will also keep there a Lieutenant-General as in Albania; (6) after some time we shall decide on possibilities for complete union.

The Duce read the report and approved. He desires, however, to have it countersigned by Matchek. In the meantime, I have sent it to Zagreb by safe means. In the coming week we shall begin our payments via Zurich.

Mussolini is taken up with the idea of breaking Yugoslavia to pieces and of annexing the kingdom of Croatia. He thinks the undertaking is sufficiently easy, and, as things stand, I agree with him. Meanwhile, I am thinking of organizing the Albanians of Kossovo better. They could be turned into a dagger pointed at the side of Belgrade.

MAY 27, 1939. This is a crucial day in our relations with Great Britain. The Duce received Percy Loraine for his formal presentation; but soon the visit assumed an entirely different character. The Duce, who ordinarily is courteous and engaging, was very stern; his face became absolutely impenetrable; it looked like the face of an Oriental god sculptured in stone. He began by asserting that in view of the manifest British policy of encirclement it was necessary to ask, as he now was asking, whether the agreement of April 16th had any tangible value left. Percy Loraine was not expecting this blow; he blushed and struggled for words, then managed to compose himself. He asked if, while reserving the right to call for instructions from

his own Government, he might at this time expound his own personal views. Then he began to argue with a certain professional ability. His strongest argument was the one which dealt with the attitude maintained by the British during the Albanian crisis. There was no question that the status quo of the Mediterranean had been changed by us; yet Chamberlain had assumed the responsibility of confirming the value of the Pact. The Duce countered harshly in an argumentative tone. He declared that British policies were leading the whole of Europe into war. Through guarantees given to the small Powers, Great Britain had brought about a very dangerous aggravation of the situation. Agreement between the Germans and the Poles could have been reached if the British had not interfered. At this point Loraine protested more strongly; for a moment I had the impression that he was about to get up and ask permission to leave. He controlled himself with difficulty, but emphasized his regret that Mussolini's point of view was so far removed from that of the British. Mussolini answered that time would prove who was right. The Duce made a brief and cutting comment on the Anglo-Russian alliance, and then the conversation was brusquely ended. During the course of the long walk between the table and the door, Loraine sought for some human contact with the Duce. But it was impossible. He walked slowly and gravely, with his eyes on the floor and his mind elsewhere. His leave-taking was icy.

Mussolini then told me that he had meditated long and that he thought the moment had arrived to make the position clear. He handed me a memorandum he had written, which I am to give to Hitler on my meeting with him, regarding the necessity for immediate Axis occupation of Central Europe and the Balkans in case of war.

The Master of Ceremonies, who knows nothing of these conversations, and who accompanied the British Ambassador home, said: "Loraine, on his return, looked flushed and congested and had a nervous twitch. He looked like a man who had received a slap in the face. He talked to himself all the time."

Let us see what will happen now. In my opinion the British-

Italian agreement is dead and maybe Chamberlain will die with it.

MAY 29, 1939. A long conversation with the Bulgarian Minister. Naturally the attitude of his country was the principal subject of our talks. I maintained that the geographic and political situation of Bulgaria as well as her best interests necessitate joining the Axis. It may be possible for Yugoslavia to remain neutral, but for Bulgaria, surrounded by enemies, such a possibility is excluded. The Minister, who was in morning dress, seemed to share my point of view. He said, however, that from the military point of view Bulgaria is as yet unprepared. I did not fail to reply that if Bulgaria adopts a well-defined policy, it will be to the interest of Italy and Germany to make good her deficiencies. I informed Talamo of the conversation and authorized him to speak along these lines with the leaders in Sofia.

Christic informed me that Yugoslavia has asked Turkey to declare that the Anglo-Turkish pact does not affect the Balkans. The distrust between Belgrade and Ankara becomes more accentuated.

Cavallero<sup>124</sup> has been nominated vice-president of the Italo-German joint commission, as prescribed in the Treaty. I shall leave on Wednesday for Berlin, taking with me a note written by the Duce.

I made certain general provisions for Albania; among the more important are the unification of the armed forces and suppression of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

MAY 30, 1939. The Senate has approved by acclamation the budget of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. I received François-Poncet. He has nothing important to tell me and brings up only a few trifling routine matters, but he is trying to see the lie of the land and find out our reaction. He does not speak about continuing negotiations and nor do I. We are in agreement in thinking that it is preferable to wait until the situation develops. I criticize the policy of encirclement; he answers

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<sup>124</sup> Count Ugo Cavallero: Italian Army officer, Senator and Chief of Staff to the Duke of Aosta in Ethiopia; Chief of Staff after the resignation of Badoglio. Held this post till Mussolini's overthrow. Arrested by the Badoglio Government. Committed suicide in September, 1943.



that it is a simple, defensive action on the part of those who fear further aggressive ventures by the Axis. In his opinion, March 15th, the date on which Hitler tore up the Munich protocol, furnished the key to the new situation. He is pessimistic, but does not exclude the possibility of maintaining for a long time a peace based upon the balance of power in Europe. The first experiment lasted for some time—from 1871 to 1914. He alludes to the fact that Mussolini has refused to go on with the exchange of a fragment of the Ara Pacis<sup>125</sup> now in Paris and deduces from this that his mind is extremely embittered against France.

I give von Mackensen some documents furnished by our secret service which prove that the Anglo-Turkish accord is a genuine offensive alliance against the Axis, and I give him information on the heated conference between Loraine and the Duce in the Palazzo Venezia.

MAY 31, 1939. Mussolini listens to my account of the meeting with Poncet with little interest. He says: "Had I accepted the fragment of the Ara Pacis the whole French press would have said that I would have to be satisfied with a few stones instead of Tunisia and Corsica." For the moment he has no intention of easing relations with France. He would like, instead, to obtain 300,000,000 gold francs from Switzerland in order to avoid revealing the decrease in our treasury reserves. In the present political situation I am of the opinion that it would be difficult to get money from Berne.

The Duce sets down some directives: (1) to get Hungary and Spain into the military alliance; (2) facilitate the entrance of Japan into the Axis; (3) make Bulgaria's position in favour of the Axis definite; (4) obtain a definite clarification of the Yugoslav attitude. In this connection it is necessary to note that Matchek has refused to sign the Carnelutti Report, saying that he has resumed negotiations with Belgrade and that he still wishes to clarify some points in the future relations between Rome and Croatia. This I have from Carnelutti.

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<sup>125</sup> Ara Pacis: The French Government, in the interest of appeasement, had the idea of returning to Mussolini this antiquity, removed from Italy by Napoleon. Mussolini's reasons for refusing the offer are indicated by Ciano.

According to Bombelles, the refusal might have been much more categoric because Matchek has made other commitments and because he is a democrat and avoids any close understandings with Fascism. The Duce, to whom I show Carnelutti's letter, is of the opinion that we must wait for the results of Prince Paul's visit to Berlin. He also believes that some concessions can be made on the future state of Croatia, contenting ourselves with having a common Ministry for Foreign Affairs and control of the army.

JUNE 1, 1939. Our troops in Spain are displeased at the fact that the Duce will not review them. But he does not intend to change his decision: he will not come to Naples because the King is there; and he wants a delegation to come to Rome. He will issue an order of the day. I am thinking of a parade in September; it might be the occasion for a review.

The Spanish Ambassador comes to me for one of his pointless conversations. The conversation drifts to the question of restoring the Spanish monarchy. I do not conceal our point of view from him, and am increasingly convinced that he is flirting with Don Juan<sup>126</sup> and is trying to ingratiate himself with the British. I shall ask Serrano Suñer<sup>127</sup> for his head.

I see Loraine for the first time since the conference at the Palazzo Venezia. He says that he will go to London soon and asks if there is anything to add to what the Duce said. Nothing so far as I am concerned. But we discuss the situation, and he does not conceal the fact that the Anglo-Turkish Pact is the direct result of our occupation of Albania. Hence it is that the confidence on which the Pact of April 16th was based has come to be questioned. We agree that for the moment there is nothing to be done; he repeats more or less what François-Poncet had said about the dangers of the present situation, which might develop into two rival blocs.

JUNE 2, 1939. At the station I received the Albanians, who have come to receive the text of their future constitution which will unify the armed forces and abolish their Ministry of

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<sup>126</sup> Don Juan: Second surviving son of the late King Alfonso XIII.

<sup>127</sup> Ramon Serrano Suñer. Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1940-2. Franco's brother-in-law.

Foreign Affairs. As rewards, we shall give them certain compensations of a personal nature, such as nominations to the Senate, ambassadorial titles, etc. I must say that probably for the first time since the annexation they were visibly satisfied. Which goes to show that personal benefits will frequently silence even the most noble feelings. . . .

Guarneri relieved himself of some very pessimistic talk on the exchange situation. Our reserves are now greatly reduced and must somehow be augmented if we are to carry through to the end of the year.<sup>128</sup> Guarneri speaks openly of bankruptcy and says that it can be avoided only by bringing imperialist policies to an end.

The Duce said to-day that Guarneri's talk is just one of the usual "exhalations" which expresses exactly the state of mind and the wishes of certain plutocratic circles. In any case, it made no great impression on him, since, after all, he has been listening to Guarneri's false prophecies for six whole years and they all fail to materialize with perfect punctuality, as democratic prophecies always do. I myself believe, however, that the truth is somewhere in between.

JUNE 3, 1939. Ceremony at the court for the delivery of the constitution to the Albanians. The King asks who drafted the document and observes in a sarcastic tone that there is no heraldic symbol of the dynasty on the Albanian flag. I answer that this is not quite so, because it does have the blue Savoyard sash and the crown of Scanderbeg. This convinces him, but he remains in a bad humour. I report this to the Duce, who seizes the occasion to deliver an attack on the monarchy. Starace is also present. The Duce declares that he is sick and tired of dragging behind him "empty baggage cars, which, moreover, very often have their brakes on", that the King "is a small man, grumpy and untrustworthy, who at this time is concerned with embroidery on the flag and does not feel any pride in seeing his national territory increased by 30,000 square kilometres", and that, in conclusion, "it is the monarchy which, by its idiotic chatter, prevents the Army from becoming

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<sup>128</sup> Here and elsewhere Ciano gives figures. A certain characteristic confusion about the number of noughts, however, makes them quite worthless as an indication of Italy's financial situation, which was unquestionably in a state of utter confusion.

Fascist. The disgusting Asinari de Bernezzo<sup>129</sup> is responsible for this chatter."

The Duce said: "I am like a cat, cautious and prudent, but when I jump I am sure of landing where I wish. I am now considering whether we ought to finish the House of Savoy. All that would be required would be to mobilize 250,000 men in the two provinces, Forlì and Ravenna. Perhaps the posting of a manifesto will be enough." He spoke with such directness that Starace interpreted his words as marching orders for Party action.

In the afternoon I settled the problem of the co-ordination of the Albanian diplomatic service with the Italian service. A few decorations and a few jobs were enough to accomplish this.

The operation of emasculating Albania without making the patient scream—the annexation—is now practically completed. As I have already noted, for the first time the Albanians are not depressed. Such is the advantage of cold-blooded and calculated decisions. The Duce and I have brought up the problem of the irredentism of Kossovo and of Ciamuria. The Duce defines this irredentism: "The little light in the tunnel." That is, the ideal theme for us to play upon in the future to keep the Albanian national spirit high and united.

JUNE 4, 1939. Nothing new.

JUNE 5, 1939. Departure for Naples.

Serrano Suñer arrives with the Duke of Aosta. At the same time there arrives on the *Sardegna* the first contingent of the Arrow Division accompanying their Fascist comrades who are being brought home. Considerable excitement; the Legionaries sing hymns of war; cannon and sirens fill the clear and sunny air. Serrano Suñer clasps my hands for a long time and repeats words of gratitude for what Italy has done and her way of doing it. I embrace Gambara; through him I clasp to my breast every one of those who return and every one of those who remain in Spain, the guardians of a friendship and performers of a task which will produce glorious results.

I have a long conference with Serrano Suñer while we are driving through the streets of Naples. He is a slender, sickly

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<sup>129</sup> General G. M. Asinari de Bernezzo: Former head of the Carabinieri.

man—one of those creatures given to study and reflection; a very conscientious man, honest and full of enthusiasm. Having been caught in the whirlpool of the revolution, he has developed qualities of action as well as intelligence, and brings to his task a passionate faith. Intelligent, but still somewhat inexperienced, he wavers between the practical knowledge he has acquired and the vague and metaphysical conclusions he has reached by reflection. But it is always feeling that dominates him: he hates and loves impetuously. His *bête noire* is France. He said that he hates her in the first place because his two brothers were killed by French bullets, and also because he is Spanish, and for this reason considers France the eternal enemy of Greater Spain.

We touch on many points: (1). War. Spain fears a war in the near future because she is to-day at the end of her resources. In certain regions there is famine. If she can have two or preferably three years, she can reconstitute herself and complete her military preparations. Spain will be at the side of the Axis because she will be guided by feeling and by reason. A neutral Spain would, in any event, be destined to a future of poverty and humiliation. Furthermore, Franco's Spain intends to solve the problem of Gibraltar; as long as the British flag flies on Gibraltar, Spain will not be a completely free and sovereign nation. The youth of Spain lives in the desire and hope of pushing the British into the sea, and is getting ready to do so. Spain also has accounts to square with France, that "dishonest and dishonourable France", and these accounts are called Morocco and political and economic independence. Serrano Suñer was very glad to learn that we and the Germans also wish to postpone the conflict for some years.

(2). Relations with Italy. The alliance is a fact in our minds; it would be premature, for the moment, to put it in a protocol. But it is the latter that he wishes. We spoke more pointedly with regard to Germany, especially of the religious question. He is a believer, a convinced and fervent believer. The anti-Catholic excesses of the Germans offend his sensibilities.

(3). Portugal. He considers it to be fundamental to Spanish policy and to the Axis to take Portugal out of the sphere of British influence. Difficult as this may be, he intends to exert

his efforts in this direction, and asks for our collaboration.

(4). Monarchy. Perhaps "within twenty years Spain may have need of a king". Then if the Bourbons have behaved well, they can be put back on the throne, but not for the time being. The head of the state is Franco, and the necessity for a monarchy is felt in only a few quarters. Many who shout "Long live the King" try to hide their opposition to the regime by this cry. Against these people Franco will act with the harshest energy.

These are more or less the statements which Serrano Suñer repeated to the Duce in the long conference which took place at the Palazzo Venezia. The Duce has reaffirmed his determined hostility to the restoration of the monarchy "which would become a centre for opportunism and intrigue".

JUNE 8, 1939. Percy Loraine communicates London's answer to the Duce's query. Chamberlain considers the Pact of April 16th to be in full force and hopes that it may have further possibilities of development. I do not know whether such an answer will please the Duce, who is rarely satisfied with mere words and wants action. As he says, "for the time being the situation is negative; the Anglo-Turkish Pact, the guarantees given to Greece and Rumania, the negotiations with Moscow are elements of that policy of encirclement which London is directing against us."

I received from Hong Kong a document of the highest interest: it is a study made by Admiral Noble<sup>130</sup> of British naval possibilities against the Axis forces. It is couched in pessimistic terms, especially as regards the Mediterranean, dominated in his opinion by the aerial, naval, and under-sea forces of Fascist Italy.

JUNE 9, 1939. During the evening I have long conferences with Serrano Suñer. He is violent against Conde,<sup>131</sup> whom he calls an imbecile, and says that Conde had even attempted to warn him against the Duce and myself. The fact is that Conde, who is really a great fool, is extraordinarily attached to the monarchy and intrigues with the King and the princes for the restoration. He has served his purpose, and it would be just

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<sup>130</sup> Admiral Sir Percy Lockhart Harnam Noble, R.N.: Commander-in-Chief of British forces in China. Later Commander-in-Chief Western Approaches.

<sup>131</sup> Pedro Garcia Conde: Spanish Ambassador to Italy.

as well if he had a change of air. Suñer agrees, and will have him removed. Suñer also speaks to me disparagingly of General Jordana, as well as of all the Spanish diplomatic corps. He does not want to be made head of the Government. He says that this is a French manoeuvre designed to disturb his good relations with Franco, but he would like to take the place of General Jordana. Evidently he is counting on our support and for this reason he would like to hasten the coming of Franco to Italy. He was somewhat prejudiced against the Axis. Mussolini's words have dispelled his misgivings and he wants to establish contacts with the Nazis, about whom he had been somewhat doubtful before. His Catholic faith and the propaganda of certain hostile elements had succeeded in rousing in him the belief that Hitler's position was shaky.

JUNE 10, 1939. I report to the Duce on what Suñer said to me. The Duce also would like to see him as head of the Foreign Ministry, even while holding on to the Ministry of the Interior. In the opinion of the Duce, his "fifteen years' experience constitute his best asset as a leader". I shall write a letter to Franco, which I will deliver personally on the occasion of my visit.

Naval review; very beautiful. It appears that the King of Italy has praised the Roman step, even recalling certain historical episodes which prove its value to morale. The Duce's comment was: "I wanted to answer him: 'My dear, solemn idiot, it was precisely with you that I had to argue most in order to introduce it.'"

I handed the Japanese Ambassador a copy of the Noble document. I have translated a portion of it, and I can see that it is very impressive. The Ambassador leaves to-night for Berlin, where new, and it would seem more satisfactory, instructions have arrived for the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact.

I gave Mackensen the document and other telegrams which prove Yugoslav vacillation. Mackensen was irritated by Serrano Suñer because he did not mention the Germans in his speech. In Suñer's defence I explained this by saying that he had little diplomatic experience, and I affirmed that Suñer represents in Spain the man who has the confidence of the Axis. I suggest the idea of a visit to Germany.

JUNE 11, 1939. Nothing new.

JUNE 12, 1939. The Duce speaks of de Vecchi<sup>132</sup> and says that for eighteen years he has had to bear the embarrassing weight of this individual on his shoulders. "On the 28th of October, 1922, he was already willing to betray us to obtain a portfolio of some sort in the new cabinet to be formed by a coalition of various parties." After this statement he recalled, one after another, the blunders which de Vecchi had made in every one of the positions he had occupied. He aroused the wrath of God by threatening to take away the pensions of the war-wounded, then made a speech that was a real shock to the regime. Then in Africa he did his best to occupy by force territories that already belonged to us and carried out a cruel and useless slaughter. In conclusion, he thinks that he is a "headstrong clown", but he gives him everything he asks for. He has had two of his sons-in-law made barons. (Mussolini laughs about it, and will end by giving him the high military rank to which he aspires.)

A second conference at the Palazzo Venezia with Serrano Suñer. Nothing new. The Duce advises Franco to make January 3rd a day memorable in the annals of Spain by freeing himself as soon as possible from all the elements that are not faithful to the revolution. Serrano Suñer says that he has spoken to the King and to the Prince of the Asturias. He had a good impression of the latter. Of the former he speaks ill; the King is an unreliable, domineering man. The Duce suggested bettering relations between France and Spain in the near future, which made Serrano Suñer indignant.

JUNE 13, 1939. New tensions because of the question of Danzig. As a matter of fact our military attaché in Paris should have given us warning of this two days ago. This leads one to suspect that the Poles planned some action in Danzig. The Duce receives von Mackensen, who brings a gift from Goebbels. He talks chiefly about the desirability of better relations between Germany and the Church for the purpose of strengthening ties with Spain. He reviews what he has done in Italy and arrives at the conclusion that when the interests

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<sup>132</sup> Count Cesare Maria de Vecchi di Val Cismon: Fascist leader.



of the State conflict with those of the Church the State should go ahead and look after its own business. The Pope, he thinks, can go ahead and protest, if only "to save his own soul and perhaps mine too".

We have decided on the construction of Pater<sup>133</sup> Village in Tirana and also of 5000 buildings to house Italians returning from abroad. In this way we shall succeed in increasing the number of Italians living in Tirana. In Tirana the news is that everything is going well, both from the political and the military and economic points of view.

Serrano Suñer, on his farewell call, asks me to see that the secret police keep an eye on the Spanish Air Force General Kindelan during his visit in Rome. He accuses him of plotting for the monarchy and wants to have proof of this in his hands in order to denounce him to Franco.

The Duce calls me in to talk to me about Franco's visit. He is very much annoyed by the inevitable inclusion of the King in the arrangements, since Franco is the head of the state. The Duce says: "This time I don't want any meddling as there was with Hitler's visit. If the King doesn't have sense enough to withdraw, I will. This paradoxical situation must be put before the Italian people so that they may finally understand that there are certain incompatibilities, and may choose between me and the King as to who is going to be the head of the Government."

JUNE 14, 1939. Serrano Suñer leaves. He is visibly moved and repeats words of gratitude to me and to the Duce, as well as reiterating his love for Italy. He treats Conde coldly. Conde is due to be dismissed soon. Serrano Suñer told me that this idiotic individual had tried to influence him against the Duce and me, since he believes that we are opposed to the restoration of the monarchy. Relations between Serrano and Mackensen are now better, in fact, they are good. However, my intervention was necessary, because Suñer opposed the Germans, and von Mackensen was offended by his deliberate forgetfulness of the German contribution to the national cause of Spain.

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<sup>133</sup> Pater Village: Pater was an engineer and builder in high favour with Donna Rachele Mussolini.

The Duce desires that we begin to define with Spain the future programme for the western Mediterranean: Morocco would go completely to Spain; Tunisia and Algeria would go to us. An agreement with Spain should insure our permanent outlet to the Atlantic Ocean through Morocco.

Dinner at the French Embassy, a useless, colourless, second-rate dinner, in the traditional diplomatic manner with the usual "dear colleagues" charged with uncertain and presumptuous undertakings and with old court dames whose only business is to gorge themselves with free food. We hardly mentioned politics at all. Still, the French press makes a big fuss over the event, which, I repeat, represents nothing, absolutely nothing, and leaves our relations with France as before—even worse than before.

JUNE 15, 1939. I go to Genoa. The airmen return from Spain.

Genoa, unexpectedly monarchist, gives the King such a warm demonstration as to give me much food for thought.

I mention this to Starace.

JUNE 16, 1939. I return to Rome. Nothing sensational.

JUNE 17, 1939. During my absence a regrettable incident occurred in connection with an athletic parade of Nazis in Bolzano which led to the leader of the party being arrested. Von Mackensen speaks to me about it. I immediately take steps to get the secretary out of gaol, and the Duce gives his authorization to do so. They acted too impetuously. If I had been present things would have gone differently. What impression will be made abroad by the arrest in Italy of a Nazi official? And how about the impression in Germany itself? What would we say if they arrested a Fascist party secretary in Berlin or in Munich?

I receive Sthyka, ex-Minister of Albania to Belgrade. I intend to use him in connection with the Kossovo problem, about which he is very well-informed. I shall create an office for irredentisms at the Under-Secretariat for Albania.

Bottoni and Benini have just arrived from Tirana, bringing excellent news on the Albanian situation.

The Duce has gone to Riccione for a short rest.

JUNE 18, 1939. Nothing new.

JUNE 19, 1939. Nothing new.

JUNE 20, 1939. Hitler asks for the leader of the Nazi party at Bolzano to be sent to Germany because he intends to punish him in an exemplary way. It is an elegant gesture, which amounts to a public demonstration of the importance which he attributes to Italian friendship.

Conference with Talamo. He says that Bulgaria continues in its uncertain attitude, and that for the time being at least he does not hold out much hope of the Government taking a clear-cut position at the side of the Axis.

JUNE 21, 1939. The officials of the Commission for the repatriation of Germans residing in the Alto Adige leave for Berlin. There has been some uncertainty on the part of the Duce about the advisability of sending Mastromattei;<sup>134</sup> people might criticize the fact that a prefect is sent to Berlin on a diplomatic mission. But this is not quite the case; he is an expert who is going as a member of a commission. On the other hand, it seems that the Germans mean business. We must not, therefore, do anything that might put spokes in the wheel.

JUNE 22, 1939. At Buffarini's<sup>135</sup> office I support the Slovenes' request for permission to publish some small non-political newspapers in their own language. If we really want to carry out a policy that will attract the Croats, Slovenes, and so forth, we must begin by giving them the feeling that we intend to treat them intelligently and liberally. We shall think later on of tightening the reins. As for the rest, there is nothing new.

JUNE 23, 1939. I receive a letter from Serrano Suñer inviting me to go to Spain between July 10th and 18th. It is very courteously worded but appears to me to contain a certain amount of reserve. This may be due to the fact pointed out by Gambara, namely that there is some rift between Serrano Suñer and Franco. We shall see. There are many things I should like to find out in Spain, and I do not want Serrano, even though it be in the best of faith, to go too far in his predictions of total adherence to the Axis.

From Berlin they telephone that the first meeting on the

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<sup>134</sup> Mastromattei: Prefect of Bolzano.

<sup>135</sup> Guido Buffarini: Italian Minister of the Interior leading Fascist.

Alto Adige has given concrete results and that the prospects are very encouraging.

JUNE 24, 1939. Nothing new.

JUNE 25, 1939. Nothing new.

JUNE 26, 1939. Now that solitude has settled around me as well as within me, I wish, dear Father, to be in your company for a while in this great hall of Palazzo Chigi, where so often you came to support me with your trusting and far-seeing optimism.

The cruel news of your death struck me suddenly like a treacherous blow. We had seen each other only a few days before, on Wednesday or Friday in your office. I found you in what I thought was good physical shape. You spoke with your usual vivacity, and you were expounding to me plans and projects which you intended to carry out in the space of a few years. You did not hesitate to plan ahead, for you were now sure that your iron will had prevailed over the ailment which, two years ago, had almost prevailed over you. And you gave yourself sincerely, working without ever asking anything for yourself; thus the ailment struck you down stealthily.

I returned home on Monday evening, after having spent some hours in the home of friends. I had no presentiment of the loss that would befall me, but I was sad and a bit tired. I went to bed at about one o'clock, or even before. I found that, contrary to his usual habit, my servant was waiting for me to say that they had telephoned from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This surprised me. A night telephone call, which at the time of Spain and Albania was a common enough thing, appeared to me, in view of the present condition of European politics, somewhat unjustified. I learned quickly that they were calling me from Ponte a Moriano because you were not well. I had a foreboding of the truth, but I cast the thought away from me with angry violence. I telephoned to Ponte a Moriano. A servant with a sad voice answered me and gave the receiver to my mother, who, between sobs, said at once that you, Father, our good, great dear father, were no more. It was a great blow. This is not a common, ordinary word which I now repeat: it was a great blow to me,

physically and mentally. I felt that something was torn away from my physical being. Only at that moment, after thirty-six years of life, did I come to realize how real and deep and indestructible are ties of blood. You, Father, who have known from my infancy my admiring love for you, you alone can thoroughly understand my sorrow. Do you recall, when I was a child at Spezia, how I bade you good-bye every time you left the terrace of our house, facing the sea? I was unable to speak and my eyes filled with tears, but I restrained myself as long as you were present, because I did not want to show my weakness to a grown-up. But my efforts were useless, and you knew very well that as soon as you had disappeared around the corner of Via dei Colli e del Torretto I should fall to the ground, overcome by tears and loneliness. Well, Father, the same thing has happened again. I have been overwhelmed by an unreasonable sorrow just as I was at that time, with the difference that I, no longer the child in a sailor-suit, proud of the ribbon which I wore with the name of your ship, but a man with many grey hairs, with a heavy burden of responsibility, of thoughts and worries, with my secret sadness, which I have hidden even from you—I am a man, in short, who cannot be cured of his wounds in one hour, but who carries them with him for ever from now on.

I rushed to Ponte a Moriano in a car, all alone. Alone, not because the friends whom I had told had abandoned me, but because I wanted to remain with you and every other person would have been an obstacle to this, our first ultra-terrestrial communion. My journey from Rome to Ponte a Moriano was long and terrible, but when dawn came, I do not know why, there arose in me a hope that perhaps I had misunderstood, and that your end had not come. I do not know, I cannot succeed in explaining the strange fleeting hope that came to me. Passing through Leghorn, in front of the telegraph office which you so carefully planned and which you loved so much, I saw the flag at half-mast. For the first time, during the whole night, I wept.

Mother, overcome with a grief that only fifty years of a faithful and devoted love can engender, received me with sad tenderness and led me to the room where you were lying

serenely on the bed, wearing the grey suit in which death had overtaken you a few hours before. I should have said that you were sleeping were it not for a small crucifix that had been piously placed upon your great heroic breast. Mother had the strength to tell me, in all its details, your tragedy and her own. The illness that overcame you when you left Leghorn, your will-power in attempting to dissimulate your ailment, the incessant alternation of slight improvements and more serious attacks, the useless search for help in the deserted and impassable countryside, all this Mother told me. And she told me that, arriving home, your home in Ponte a Moriano, which you loved so well and where you played with my children to our mutual delight, and where even on that night little Marzio slept in blessed ignorance of what was happening, you insisted on getting out of the car without help, and, realizing that even an old fighter like you could not prevail this time, you put your arms around the doctor, saying calmly: "After all, the end has come", and breathed your last. You died as a soldier, as a Fascist, as a Christian.

My Father, I do not speak to you about myself. You know, and you understand that any words of mine would be an offence to our great love as well as to my own sorrow. I shall tell you about the others instead. You were and are very much beloved. More than anybody can believe. Your friends Rodinis,<sup>136</sup> Baiocchi, Caparma, and many others were affected by your passing as animals do, wounded to death and seeking only to die in solitude. Starace arrived just a little after me and was terribly grieved. With his own hands he chose to place on your bed, to the right and to the left of your mortal remains, the party's insignia which you have honoured so much by your work and by your faith.

Then, in a very short while, the King arrived. He could not control his emotion. He spoke about you in generous terms. He greeted you with the Roman salute and his eyes filled with tears. Since he had arrived without any ceremony, with only an aide in civilian dress, he laid aside all formality of royalty, and one could see in him only a poor old man burdened with

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<sup>136</sup> Rodinis: Italian diplomat; associate of Ansaldo as editor of "Il Telegrafo", Ciano's newspaper in Leghorn.

sorrow, who wanted to weep over the coffin of a lost friend. On the stairs the King, who was going out, met the Duce, who had just arrived by air from Forlì. Your Duce, whom you loved so much and to whom you were always faithful, really loved you as you wanted him to love you and as on many an occasion you knew he loved you and wished that he would put it into words. But to put his love into words is not in his hard nature. He spoke it to you, however, after you were dead. He stayed long, looking at you with steady eyes and contracted face. Then he caressed you tenderly on head and shoulders, and twice he kissed you on the forehead. He repeated that the death of his brother Arnaldo and your end were for him the hardest blows. He left after two hours, only to return the following day to pay you final homage in Leghorn.

What a strange and painful thing, Father, that I who have always obeyed you should now have the sad duty of directing the final preparations. Still, it was necessary to go through with it, and so I gave orders that they should dress you in the uniform of an admiral with the decorations of the Party and of the Fascist armed forces, and that the temporary burial should take place at the Cemetery of the Purificazione near your dear ones, and that the final interment be prepared at Montenero. It must not take place in Famedio, where the other great Livornese rest. You are the glory not only of a city, you belong to Imperial Italy. Your monument will rise from the top of the hill. It will be a monument that will recall your exploits in war and your heroism. On top of it will be a beacon which will be lit every night so that we may all be reminded from a distance of your immortal spirit. I say from a distance, because it will be seen even from that Corsica which is on the horizon of our savage Livornian Sea and in whose freedom you have always believed.

Late in the afternoon we carried you to Leghorn, and seeing you borne away for ever from your home at Ponte a Moriano was for me another blow. I followed you in the first car and beside me was Starace who, I repeat, has been like a brother. Almost the whole journey was made very slowly, often at a walking pace, for a great crowd of grieving peasants lined both sides of the street along the way. And all the flowers of Lucca

were offered to you spontaneously. We arrive in Leghorn at about seven o'clock in the evening. The weather is very fine: blue sky and warm air. All the church bells are ringing. The city seems to be stricken by an irreparable catastrophe, and it seems too that everyone is involved in this tragedy. A silent and pensive people gathered on the pavements. Eyes are fixed and dry. Arms are raised in the Roman salute. Many women kneel and many are praying. This homage of love that your city pays you is such that only you could have imagined it. The love which you gave the people of Leghorn during your lifetime is being repaid to you many times over, if that were possible, in the hour of your departure. In the hall of the Fascio, where you rest on the gun carriage which heroes deserve, a great crowd passes silently and sadly. I remain near you for a long time. To look at you and to caress you lessens my sorrow, and I wish I could embrace one by one all who come to pay you homage. I recognize the genuineness of their sorrow—the sorrow which makes men brothers. The order to mount guard has been given to the best men of Italy, all those who have excelled in the last twenty years in arms, in politics, in the Faith. The war, and that resolution which is the new glory of Italy, are there beside you personified in her best men.

Innumerable touching happenings, but I shall recall only one, because certainly it will be dearest to your heart. An old man, so old that he appeared to be ageless, dragged himself along to pay homage to your remains and said that he wanted to honour not only your memory but also that of your father, whose cabin boy he had been on board a sailing-ship.

I have returned, Father, to see the house in which you were born. It is modest and somewhat ill-kept. This will no longer be the case in the future. I shall take an interest in it. And I shall see to it that it becomes, as it should be, a place sacred to all those people—and there are many of them—who keep alive your memory.

Yesterday, because of you, the King and the Duce met on the staircase of a modest country home. To-day, again because of you, all of Italy has come to Leghorn. Never before in its history has the entire life of the nation been assembled within its walls.



The last solemn honours have been paid. The Duce came by plane from Romagna and on foot followed the coffin bearing your mortal remains. Next to him was Mother, who has courageously kept her vow to remain near you to the last, and I myself. Meanwhile, Maria, who is not altogether well but who will get better, remained in Rome with her silent tears, near the radio that transmitted to her everything that was happening.

The religious ceremony took place in the cathedral. I had suggested St. Peter and Paul, the church of your childhood. But it was too small. The cathedral itself, which, when I was a child, seemed to have a boundless immensity, could not hold even a part of the high officials who were following you. As for the common people, they crowded the streets, and their attitude was so compassionate and humble that the entire city seemed to be transformed into an immense temple of sorrow. After the blessing on the Piazza there took place the Fascist roll-call. I am sure that among all the voices you recognized my own. "Present" is the only word, Father, that I can say of you since you have left me.

If in life there were times when you were or seemed to be far away, now that you are no more this is not possible. You are near me and with my spirit, endlessly and inseparably. The Duce and Mother had withdrawn. I followed your remains as far as the cemetery, and as you were crossing the fatal threshold of the Purificazione the naval squadron which arrived during the night fired its guns in your honour. For some minutes you paused near the tombs of your forefathers, as you were wont to do every time you came to Leghorn. Then you were carried to a small chapel where you now rest in a niche until such time as a worthy monument is ready to receive you. I am grateful to those who have arranged for you to be put in a niche and not buried. It was nerve-racking to see the marble slab shut you off from the world of the living, but it would have been sadder still for me to see you buried in the earth.

The militiamen and my friends led me away as I was once again overcome by my grief. Then, with Mother, I started on my way back to Rome and, Father dear, life must again take

on its usual rhythm with'in and without. This is inevitable and perhaps best. But to-day, as I write you, I am still upset. I feel a profound loneliness in my heart and a sweet and painful sadness. Some day, if I know that it would not be contrary to your wishes and to your nature, I will speak and write about you as I wish to do and as I must, so that so many beautiful things may be made public which you have stubbornly wanted to conceal. To-day I would not know how, nor could I do it. But remember, Father, that among all those who honestly do you honour here, I do so now with my devotion, with my love, with my tenderness, which tragic fate has impressed on me profoundly, immutably, and completely.

JULY 3, 1939. Life goes on, and my work helps somewhat to draw me out of this great sorrow into which I have been plunged. The Duce was really paternal and uttered many expressions of great attachment and affection for my father. Then, this morning, he handed me the document that Father had in his possession since November 1926—a letter in which the Duce nominated him as his successor and gave him instructions on the measures to be taken in case of any sudden disappearance of the Duce. The Duce also spoke of his plans regarding the successor to my father in the chamber: Grandi and Farinacci. I inclined towards Farinacci, but this morning Starace, who opposes such a candidature, and maybe with good reasons, came to see me. We agree on a colourless figure, such as Teruzzi or Acerbo<sup>137</sup>, for the nomination.

The international situation has become obscure in these last few days because of the problem of Danzig. I remain calm, thinking that it is a false alarm. The fact is that the Germans haven't said a word on the subject, which cannot be reconciled with the commitments of the Pact. The Duce has outlined a plan for a solution of the problem through a plebiscite. But this seems to me rather utopian and I told him so.

Gathering at Palazzo Chigi to discuss the question of the return of the German population from Alto Adige to Germany.

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<sup>137</sup> Giacomo Acerbo: Agriculturist. Member Fascist Grand Council. Minister of Finance, 1943. Professor at Rome University till July, 1944, suspended by Allied Military Government. Condemned to death while in hiding, 1944. Arrested and sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment in 1945.

Things are going well, and I believe that in a short time we shall have satisfactory results.

JULY 4, 1939. The question of Danzig is slowly becoming more reassuring. From Berlin no communication, which confirms the fact that nothing dramatic is in the offing.

I have seen Christic, who has taken upon himself to tell me that his country does not intend to allow itself to be compromised by the pact which Turkey has made with the Western democracies. I have also seen the Japanese Ambassador, who states that his Government is ready to sign the Pact with some reservations, more pro forma than anything else. I have likewise seen the British Ambassador, who spoke mournfully about the bitterness of our press with respect to his country. I answered that it is not the press but the facts which have created a new and very harsh state of mind between Italy and Great Britain.

The Duce received Cavallero in my presence. He said that the Joint Italian-German Commission will have, in relation to the Axis, the same functions which the Supreme Defence Commission has had for internal questions.

I have received Badoglio's report on Albania: "*Quam parva sapientia!*"

JULY 5, 1939. I see a number of diplomats, who are preparing to go on leave, with their minds more at rest now that the Danzig storm seems to have quieted down.

François-Poncet tries to break a lance for a journalist who has been expelled. We discuss the question of responsibility for the present situation and end in concluding that only time can better it.

The Greek, Metaxas,<sup>138</sup> pays a courtesy visit, but he is stunned by my reception and by all the reservations which I raise on the matter of Greece's acceptance of a unilateral guarantee from Great Britain, whose effect is to place his country in the somewhat unenviable position of a semi-protectorate.

JULY 6, 1939. Conferences with Villani, the Belgian Ambassador, and the Turkish and Yugoslav Ambassadors. Nothing important. We urge Berlin to make a statement on

<sup>138</sup> Metaxas: Greek Minister in Rome, 1930-40; in Paris, 1940-1. Private secretary to King George of the Hellenes, 1943-4; resigned. Later at Greek Legation in Cairo.

the question of the exodus of the Germans from Alto Adige. It seems that the Führer is creating difficulties, and it is easy to see his reasons. However, the statement is necessary in order to re-establish the genuineness of the measure, since the foreign press is attempting to falsify its nature by every possible means.

JULY 7, 1939. Like a good ambassador who is new to his work with the Fascists, Percy Loraine makes a great to-do about communicating a personal message from Chamberlain, and succeeds in having himself conveyed to Palazzo Venezia. The message was of no particular importance. It was a sort of charge in a minor key against German claims to Danzig, mentioning, besides, the dangers for the peace of the world that might come from such pretensions. The Duce challenged the message immediately, point by point, and some of his arguments were really brilliant, such as the one about Poland being the last country who should speak about Czechoslovakia, since it was she, Poland, who struck the mortal blow when Czechoslovakia was down on her knees. He concluded by saying twice: "Tell Chamberlain that if England is ready to fight in defence of Poland, Italy will take up arms with her ally Germany." Percy Loraine hardly said a word. The second interview at Palazzo Venezia had no more brilliant results than the first.

During the evening I acquainted von Mackensen with what had happened, and he seemed to be particularly satisfied with the attitude taken by the Duce on the British move.

JULY 8, 1939. Nothing new.

JULY 9, 1939. I leave for Spain.

JULY 19, 1939. I have set down my impressions of Spain in a notebook. The Duce is quite satisfied with the report.

I summon Magistrati to Rome about the matter of the meeting between Hitler and Mussolini, which is fixed for August 4th. I fear that there will be another of Attolico's endemic crises of fear. Nevertheless, the meeting must be well prepared in order to prevent its being futile. Perhaps in view of the fact that, for many reasons, war plans must be delayed as long as possible, he could talk to the Führer about launching a proposal for an international peace conference. This would offer

the following advantages: either the democracies will agree to sit around a table and negotiate, in which case they will have to end by yielding considerably, or they will refuse, and in this case we shall have the advantage of having taken the initiative for peace, thus strengthening our position in arguing for what we want. But what are the real intentions of Hitler? Attolico is very much concerned and gives warning of the imminence of a new and perhaps fatal crisis.

JULY 20, 1939. The information sent by Attolico continues to be alarming. From what he says, the Germans are preparing to strike at Danzig by August 14th. And for the first time Caruso<sup>139</sup> from Prague reports troop movements on a vast scale. But is it possible that all this should take place without our knowledge after so many protestations of peace made by our Axis comrades? We shall see.

By order of the Duce I have presented an ultimatum to the Nuncio regarding the *Osservatore Romano*. Either it will cease its subtle propaganda against the Axis or we shall prohibit its circulation in Italy. It has become the official organ of the anti-Fascists.

Villani speaks of the possibility of placing the Duke of Aosta on the throne of Hungary, but I have not succeeded in finding out whether he is acting on orders or on his personal initiative. If the latter, the matter is not of great importance.

JULY 21, 1939. Massimo<sup>140</sup> is not so pessimistic about the situation and he confirms my suspicions: that Attolico permitted himself to be carried away by a fit of panic without very good reasons. Naturally Massimo expresses himself with a thousand reservations and ambiguities, as is his way. Such is his nature, which neither years nor events will change. He is generally favourable to the proposal for a peace conference. He agrees on the necessity of presenting it to the Germans very tactfully in such a way as to avoid its being interpreted by them to mean that we would wish to withdraw from our obligations to the Alliance.

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<sup>139</sup> Pietro Caruso: Officer of the Fascist militia, Chief of Police in Rome. Minister to Czechoslovakia. Tried by first High Court of the Bonomi Government and shot by firing squad, September, 1944.

<sup>140</sup> Massimo: Italian diplomat in Berlin.

JULY 22, 1939. I take Magistrati to the Duce, who has worked out a plan for the meeting at the Brenner Pass. It is based on proposing an international conference. The Duce outlines at some length the reasons for our proposal. I am sceptical of the possibilities of such a conference actually taking place, but I agree on the utility of our move which will, above all, throw confusion and dissension into the opposition camp, where many voices are already being raised against war.

I insist on two points: (1) that the condition must be included that our proposal be considered valid only if the Germans do not previously decide to wage war, since, in that case, it would be useless to discuss anything; (2) that Ribbentrop is interested in the question. I am doubtful, very doubtful, about Attolico's ability now. He has lost his head. I am sending a telegram to Magistrati ordering him to take part personally in all the negotiations.

I receive Koliegi,<sup>141</sup> with whom I discussed the problem of Kossovo and of Ciamuria. He will prepare a memorandum on our plans. I give these instructions for action in three successive stages: (1) general broad propaganda laying stress on culture and religion; (2) similar propaganda concentrating on direct action; (3) clandestine military organization to be ready for the moment when the inevitable Yugoslav crisis comes to a head.

JULY 23, 1939. I tried to pay a visit to my children at Capri, but the rough sea prevented my landing. News from Spain minimizes the importance of the liquidation of Queipo de Llano.<sup>142</sup> However, this liquidation was expected, and the speech was nothing but the pretext that Franco had been awaiting a long time. I remember that after having called General Queipo "crazy", Serrano Suñer said that it was his intention to kick him upstairs by sending him to the "golden exile" of the Buenos Aires Embassy. Events have permitted the realization of this idea sooner than expected.

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<sup>141</sup> Koliegi: Albanian Cabinet Minister in pay of Ciano.

<sup>142</sup> General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano: Military Governor of Andalusia and Inspector-General of Carabineros till 1939. Well known for piquant and sometimes drunken broadcasts during Civil War. Chief of Spanish Military Mission to Italy, 1939-40. Dismissed from all posts by Franco's order in June, 1942, no official reason given. Sent to enforced residence in Malaga.

JULY 24, 1939

JULY 24, 1939. Attolico will see von Ribbentrop. I am curious to know the German reaction to our proposal. I hope that it will be favourable but I do not believe that it will.

Villani brings the Duce two letters from Teleki. The first to confirm the absolute adherence of Hungary to the Axis; the second raises some reservations as regards a conflict with Poland. I vaguely suspect that the first letter was written in order to launch the second.

Villani also speaks of the dynastic question and frequently mentions the name of the Duke of Aosta. He says he speaks for himself, but he admits that such a possibility is being discussed even in government circles. He severely criticizes Czaky, whom he considers "lacking in balance, dominated by a boundless ambition, and without scruples".

The Yugoslav Minister repeats for the nth time his country's act of faith in collaboration with the Axis. They evidently feel our growing suspicions, which have been accentuated by Prince Paul's visit to London.

JULY 25, 1939. Nothing new. Yesterday's Hungarian move made a bad impression on the Duce and on the Germans. That was to be expected. At the Palazzo Chigi I had the first meeting regarding the reception to be given Franco.

In a long visit Guarneri yet again sounded the alarm on the monetary situation, which according to him is bad. He is preparing an alarming report for the Duce, who listens to him with "his imperturbable pessimism", and this is what most seriously troubles Guarneri.

JULY 26, 1939. I telephoned to Magistrati about the conversation with Ribbentrop. His reaction to the proposal for an international conference was unfavourable. He will talk to the Führer about it, but it is easy to see now that nothing will come of it. In which case, it would seem to be a good idea to postpone the meeting of the two chiefs. In any event, before suggesting a decision to the Duce, I prefer to await the arrival of Attolico's message which is being sent by air.

I tell Villani confidentially of the impression caused in Rome and Berlin by the Hungarian note regarding non-intervention in case of war with Poland. He notes our disappointment and

puts the responsibility on Count Czaky, a man whom I have always judged severely.

JULY 27, 1939. I go to Leghorn to attend the ceremony on the thirtieth day after Father's death. After a month sorrow grips my soul more deeply and more desperately than the first day. I can't get used to the idea of the loss of him whom I loved so much and who has done so much for me. May God watch over him.

I resume my work with the usual intensity. This soothes me. I receive Attolico's report, which I send to the Duce. The mistake the Ambassador has made becomes more and more obvious. Once again Ribbentrop has affirmed the German determination to avoid war for a long time. The idea of postponing the useless meeting at the Brenner Pass takes hold of me more and more. However, I ask the Duce to read the report before he makes any decision.

Franco submits the name of Queipo as head of the Spanish military mission in Italy, and, naturally, it is immediately accepted. This is a clever move in order to put an end to all the gossip of recent days, to get rid of Queipo de Llano and at the same time put him in his place.

Good news from Albania, where mining explorations are proceeding very well. The Ammi Company has already yielded 8,000,000 tons of iron ore and many even greater deposits are being discovered.

JULY 28, 1939. After reading the report, the Duce decided to postpone his meeting with Hitler and I think he did well. I telephone Attolico, who is still trying to lead us along. This time Attolico missed the boat. He was frightened by his own shadow and, probably with somebody in the German Foreign Ministry, has been trying to save his country from a non-existent danger. It's too bad. This Ambassador has done good work, but now allows himself to be taken in by the war panic. This may easily be explained by the fact that he is a rich man.

It appears that Ribbentrop has asked time to report to Hitler, who had expressed himself against the conference. To-morrow we shall have a reply on the postponement.

The Bulgars are concerned about the alignment of Turkish



JULY 28, 1939

forces. They are right. Ankara, with British help, again wants to try to play the game of supremacy in the Balkans. We must take advantage of this fact to put fear into the Greeks and Yugoslavs, both of whom still remember the stench of the Turks. Anyway, Markovic has been greatly alarmed ever since news first arrived of the understanding between Turkey and Great Britain. I shall get Ansaldo<sup>143</sup> to write on this question. I don't expect too much, but it is always worth while trying to revive certain old hatreds which are not entirely dead.

JULY 29, 1939. Nothing new.

JULY 30, 1939. Nothing new. We have not yet been able to get a reply from Berlin regarding the Brenner Pass meeting.

Flying to Capri.

JULY 31, 1939. Nothing new except the postponement of the Brenner Pass meeting, decided personally by Hitler. I am glad that this meeting, which would have been meaningless and dangerous, has been avoided, at least for the time being.

AUGUST 1, 1939. Nothing new.

AUGUST 2, 1939. The Duce is irritated by the sending of Indian troops to Egypt. To-morrow I shall ask Percy Loraine for an explanation and particulars of this British decision in the light of the Anglo-Italian Agreement.

I received the Yugoslav and Hungarian Ministers, as well as the French Chargé d'Affaires. Conversations that had no importance.

Attolico continues to harp on his favourite theme of the meeting of Hitler and Mussolini, still insisting on the bugbear of a sudden decision that will be made by Hitler for August 15th. Attolico's insistence keeps me wondering. Either the Ambassador has lost his head or he sees and knows something which has completely escaped us. Appearances are in favour of the first alternative, but it is necessary to observe events carefully.

AUGUST 3, 1939. Percy Loraine says that the information about Indian troops in Egypt was furnished to our military attaché in London. This is true, but the report has not yet reached us.

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<sup>143</sup> Giovanni Ansaldo: Editor of Ciano's paper, "Il Telegrafo," of Leghorn.

Massimo writes a private letter from which it appears that he is in disagreement with the Ambassador as to the danger of an approaching crisis. He advises us against asking the Germans for a clarification of their programme. If Massimo, notwithstanding his considerable, his excessive caution, has decided to take such a step, it means that he is sure of what he is doing. I have transmitted his letter to the Duce. Roatta,<sup>144</sup> the new military attaché, on the other hand, informs us of the concentration of forces and of troop movements on the Polish frontier. Who is right? I may be mistaken, but I continue to feel optimistic.

AUGUST 4, 1939. A brief conversation with Christic to call his attention to the danger presented by the excessive liberty of action allowed in Yugoslavia to certain of Zog's emissaries. According to information in our possession, they are attempting to start frontier incidents. Christic promised he would intervene strongly, and I believe he will keep his word, because he is very much afraid of any possible complications.

Attolico's alarmist bombardment continues. *The situation seems obscure to me.* I am beginning to think of the possibility of a meeting with von Ribbentrop. The moment has come when we must really know how matters stand. The situation is too serious for us to view developments passively.

The Duce returns to Rome.

AUGUST 5, 1939. Nothing new.

AUGUST 6, 1939. I received ample assurances from Christic about the precautions that will be taken with reference to the Albanians. I confer with the Duce. The King has expressed his intention of giving me the collar of the Order of the Annunziata. The Duce was evasive at first, since "the collar may lead to compromises that it would be better not to make", but now he is persuaded as to the desirability of my having it, and to-morrow he is to write to the King about the matter.

We discussed the situation. We agree in feeling that we must find some way out. By following the Germans we shall

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<sup>144</sup> General Mario Roatta: Military Attaché in Berlin, 1939. Chief of Italian General Staff, 1943. Called the "Butcher of Yugoslavia". Arrested 1944. Escaped before trial, and was sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment.

go to war, and go to war in the most unfavourable conditions for the Axis, and especially for Italy. Our gold reserves are reduced to almost nothing, as well as our stocks of metals, and we are far from having completed our economic and military preparations. If the crisis comes we shall fight if only to save our "honour". But we must avoid war. I propose to the Duce the idea of my meeting von Ribbentrop—a meeting which ostensibly would be private in character, but during which I would attempt to continue discussion of Mussolini's project for a world peace conference. He is quite favourable. To-morrow we shall discuss the matter further, but I am convinced that the Duce wants vigorous action to avoid the crisis. And he is right.

AUGUST 7, 1939. The Duce has written a fine letter to the King to say that he approves of my receiving the collar of the Order of the Annunziata. He writes among other things: "It is my duty to declare to Your Majesty that to Count Ciano is due that penetration of Albania from within which has permitted us to annex it almost without striking a blow. This in itself is worth the collar."

The Duce has approved of my meeting von Ribbentrop, and I have therefore telephoned Attolico instructions on this point. Attolico himself had thought of something of the sort and was very glad. I have added that the meeting between the Duce and Hitler can take place at some other time when the Anglo-French-Russian negotiations<sup>145</sup> have been concluded.

We are favourably impressed by the measures taken by Franco to create a single party. The proof of his success is the wild fury of the French press.

AUGUST 8, 1939. With Benini at the Duce's, to discuss the question of Albanian iron ore. The Duce is quite satisfied

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<sup>145</sup> British Mission to Moscow, 1939: Chamberlain announced in the House of Commons that British and French Military Missions would go to Moscow forthwith to conduct conversations with the Russians to decide how the military agreement between the three countries should be incorporated in the Three-Power Mutual Assistance Pact. Both Missions left Moscow on August 24th following the signing of the Russo-German Pact. Marshal Voroshilov denied that negotiations were broken off because of the Pact. He said that insuperable difficulties had arisen because Poland would not admit the need for military assistance from Russia, whereas Russia could only help Great Britain and France by putting troops in Polish territory. Subsequent information makes it clear that, in fact, the Russo-German Pact had been virtually decided upon before the British and French Mission arrived in Moscow.

with the report. He decides that later on I shall make a visit to Albania, during which the collar of the Order of the Annunziata will be conferred on me. Massimo writes in a rather soothing tone from Berlin. He does not foresee any immediate aggressive intentions on the part of Germany even though the Danzig situation is grave and dangerous,

AUGUST 9, 1939. Von Ribbentrop has approved the idea of our meeting. I have decided to leave to-morrow night in order to meet him at Salzburg. The Duce is anxious for me to prove to the Germans, by documentary evidence, that the outbreak of war at this time would be folly. Our preparations are not such as to allow us to believe that victory will be certain. Now there are no more than even chances; at least so the Duce thinks. On the other hand, within three years the chances will be four to one. Mussolini has constantly in mind the idea of an international peace conference. I believe the move would be excellent.

The Japanese Ambassador informs me that Tokyo has decided to adhere to the Alliance. After so much uncertainty I wonder if this is true. And, if it is true, I wonder if it is for the best, since negotiations with Moscow are as yet inconclusive. Besides, won't this fact make Germany more arrogant and encourage her to be ever more intransigent and thus bring the crisis to the boiling-point as far as the Danzig problem is concerned?

The King has very cordially confirmed to the Duce the matter of granting the collar.

AUGUST 10, 1939. The Duce is more than ever convinced of the necessity of delaying the conflict. He himself has drafted a report for the Salzburg meeting which ends with an allusion to international negotiations to settle the problems that so dangerously disturb Europe.

Before letting me go he recommends that I should frankly inform the Germans that we must avoid a conflict with Poland, since it will be impossible to localize it, and a general war would be disastrous for everybody. Never has the Duce spoken of the need for peace so unreservedly and with so much warmth. I entirely agree with him, and this will lead me to redouble my efforts. But I am doubtful as to the results.

AUGUST 11, 1939. I have a transcript elsewhere, along with reports of all my conferences, of my conversations with von Ribbentrop and Hitler. Here I shall jot down only some impressions of a general character. Von Ribbentrop is evasive whenever I ask him for particulars about German policy. His conscience troubles him. He has lied too many times about German intentions toward Poland not to feel uneasy now about what he must tell me and what they are really planning to do.

The decision to fight is implacable. He rejects any solution which might give satisfaction to Germany and avoid the struggle. I am certain that even if the Germans were given more than they ask for they would attack just the same, because they are possessed by the demon of destruction.

At times our conversation becomes very tense. I do not hesitate to express my thoughts with brutal frankness. But this does not move him. I am becoming aware of how little we are worth in the opinion of the Germans.

The atmosphere is icy. And the coldness between me and him extends even to our secretaries. During dinner not a word is exchanged. We are distrustful of each other. But I, at least, have a clear conscience. He has not.

AUGUST 12, 1939. Hitler is very cordial, but he, too, is impassive and implacable in his decision. He speaks in the large drawing-room of his house, standing in front of a table on which some maps are spread out. He exhibits a truly profound military knowledge. He speaks with a great deal of calm and becomes excited only when he advises us to give Yugoslavia the coup de grâce as soon as possible.

I realize immediately that there is no longer anything that can be done. He has decided to strike, and strike he will. All our arguments will not avail in the least to stop him. He continues to repeat that he will localize the conflict with Poland, but his affirmation that the great war must be fought while he and the Duce are still young leads me to believe once more that he is acting in bad faith.

He utters words of high praise for the Duce, but he listens with a far-away and impersonal interest to what I tell him about the bad effects a war would have on the Italian people. Actually I feel that as far as the Germans are concerned an alliance with

us means only that the enemy will be obliged to keep a certain number of divisions facing us, thus easing the situation on the German war fronts.

They care for nothing else. The fate that might befall us does not interest them in the least. They know that the decision will be forced by them rather than by us. And finally, they are promising us only a beggarly pittance.

AUGUST 13, 1939. The second meeting with Hitler is briefer, and, I would say, more concise. In his gestures the man reveals even more than he did yesterday his wish for immediate action. Our welcome is cordial, though, on both sides, restrained.

I report to the Duce at the Palazzo Venezia. And, in addition to reporting to him what happened, I also make known my own judgment of the situation, of the men and events involved. I return to Rome completely disgusted with the Germans, with their leader, with their way of doing things. They have betrayed us and lied to us. Now they are dragging us into an adventure which we do not want and which may compromise the regime and the country as a whole. The Italian people will boil over with horror when they know about the aggression against Poland and will most probably want to fight the Germans. I don't know whether to wish Italy a victory or Germany a defeat. In any case, given the German attitude, I think that our hands are free, and I propose that we act accordingly, declaring that we have no intention of participating in a war which we have neither wanted nor provoked.

The Duce's reactions are varied. At first he agrees with me. Then he says that honour compels him to march with Germany. Finally, he states that he wants his part of the booty in Croatia and Dalmatia.

AUGUST 14, 1939. I find Mussolini worried. I do not hesitate to arouse in him every possible anti-German feeling by every means in my power. I speak to him of his diminished prestige and of his playing the none-too-brilliant role of second fiddle. And, finally, I turn over to him documents which prove the bad faith of the Germans on the Polish question. The Alliance was based on promises which they now deny; they are

traitors and we must not have any scruples in ditching them. But Mussolini still has many scruples. I am going to do my level best to convince him, because in so doing I am sure that I shall render a great service to him and to my country. Meanwhile, I tell Starace not to keep from the Duce the country's true state of mind, which is clearly anti-German. To-morrow I shall also talk about this with the head of the police force. He should know that the Italian people do not want to fight alongside Germany in order so to enhance German strength that one day it will menace us. I no longer have doubts about the Germans. To-morrow it will be Hungary's turn, and then ours. We must act now while there is time.

I go to the sea-shore with the Polish Ambassador. I speak to him in vague terms and advise moderation. Our counsellor at Warsaw says that Poland will fight to the last man. The churches are filled. The people pray and sing a hymn, "O God, help us to save our country". These people will be massacred by German steel to-morrow. They are innocent. My heart is with them.

AUGUST 15, 1939. The Duce, who at first had refused to act independently of the Germans, to-day, after examining the papers that I presented to him, and after our conversations, is convinced that we must not march blindly with Germany. However, he makes one reservation: he wants time to prepare the break with Germany, and he will do it in such a way as not to break relations brutally and suddenly. He is of the opinion that it may still be possible, though perhaps difficult, for the democracies to give in, in which case it would not be profitable for us to break with the Germans, since we, too, must have our part of the booty. It is, therefore, necessary to find a solution which will permit the following: (1) if the democracies attack, we should be able to free ourselves "honourably" from the Germans; (2) if the democracies simply take their medicine without fighting back, we should take advantage of this to settle accounts once and for all with Belgrade.

For this purpose it seems useful to put down in writing the conclusions of Salzburg, either publishing the document or leaving it buried in the archives, as the case may require. But the Duce is more and more convinced that the democracies

will fight. "It is useless," he says, "to climb two thousand metres into the clouds. Perhaps we are closer to the Eternal Father up there, if He exists, but we are surely farther from men. This time it means war. And we cannot engage in war because our plight does not permit us to do so."

The conversations I had with him to-day lasted for six hours. And I talked to him with brutal frankness.

AUGUST 16, 1939. To-day I have been twice at the Palazzo Venezia. I was alone in the morning and accompanied by Attolico in the afternoon. The Duce is more than ever convinced of the fact that France and England will enter the war if Germany attacks. "If they do not act," he says, "I shall send an ultimatum to the Bank of France, asking for a consignment of gold, which is the thing the French hold more dear than anything else." He is really beginning to resent German behaviour towards him. I encourage him in this with every means in my power.

During the afternoon we examine at length the advisability of sending a note to the Germans, but then we conclude that it is better to make a verbal communication, since if it were written it might induce Germany to ask for clarification about our eventual position in case of war. This is the last thing that I desire.

Mussolini, impelled by his idea of honour, might be led to reaffirm his determination of going along with the Germans. He wanted to do it two days ago, and it was difficult to prevent him. It would be a mad venture, carried out against the unanimous will of the Italian people, who as yet do not know how things stand, but who, having had a sniff of the truth, have had a sudden fit of rage against the Germans.

Starace, whose good faith in this matter may be taken for granted, says that when Germany attacks Poland we must keep our eyes open to prevent public demonstrations against the Germans. A policy of neutrality will, on the other hand, be more popular, and, if it were necessary later, war with Germany would be every bit as popular.

AUGUST 17, 1939. I went with Attolico to the Duce. For a moment the old scruples of loyalty return to the Duce, and he wanted Attolico to confirm to Ribbentrop that, in



spite of everything, Italy will march with Germany if the democracies throw themselves into the furnace of war. I fought like a lion against this idea and succeeded in making the Duce modify these instructions to indicate, at least, that we would say nothing until the Germans have renewed their request. The Duce, however, has still not settled on a precise line of action, and he is still capable of fastening our bonds with Germany more closely. Yet everyone tells him that our country no longer wants to have anything to do with the Germans, and he realizes this.

A brief discussion with von Mackensen, in which I tell him what Attolico must tell Ribbentrop to-morrow.

A brief conversation with Christic, who is, as always, fearful and uncertain. Finally I receive Percy Loraine. I do not conceal from him that I consider the situation very grave. And I tell him that Europe needs a great deal of common sense if it is to avoid the crisis. He answers that the common sense is there, but that Europe will still not tolerate the periodical diktat of Hitler. If the crisis comes, England will fight. Personally, he would like to participate in such a fight. He regrets only one thing: that for the first time in history our two countries may be at war with each other. I made no reply, but I think he knows that I, too, do not wish this to happen.

AUGUST 18, 1939. A conversation with the Duce in the morning; his usual shifting feelings. He still thinks it possible that the democracies will not march, and that Germany might do good business cheaply, from which business he does not want to be excluded. Then, too, he fears Hitler's rage. He believes that a denunciation of the Pact or something like it might induce Hitler to abandon the Polish question in order to square accounts with Italy. All this makes him nervous and disturbed. My suggestions are given short shrift. He now suspects that I, too, am against the Axis, and that I have made up my mind, and he refuses to be influenced by me.

In the afternoon Count Czaky arrives suddenly. He is, as always, confused, muddled, and contradictory. He hurriedly submits the idea of making a pact of alliance with the Axis. He hopes in this way to save Hungary from a German invasion

or from a "friendly occupation". I discourage him, above all because I see in this a new bond between us and Germany.

The Duce also is very reserved on the matter. Czaky has no definite ideas on the situation. He still thinks that the Germans may be bluffing. He says that 95 per cent of the Hungarian people hate the Germans. The Regent himself, speaking of them, called them "buffoons and brigands", and Madame Horthy said that even she would take up arms if they had to fight the Germans.

For the first time we have been approached in an official way about putting the Duke of Aosta on the throne of Hungary. The Regent would be favourable, but the obstacle is a German veto.

AUGUST 19, 1939. I arrive at Tirana, where the news of the conferring of the collar of the Order of the Annunziata reaches me. I inspect public works at Tirana and Durazzo. In Albania much has been done materially and spiritually. Party organizations are excellent, especially work done with the younger people, who are now clearly oriented in favour of Italy.

There is no doubt that if we can work in peace, within a few years we shall possess in Albania the richest region of Italy.

I am quite satisfied with what I see, but to-day my spirit is absent. The vicissitudes of European politics are too serious and sad to permit me to concentrate my attention upon Albanian problems only.

AUGUST 20, 1939. On the steamer, the *Duke of Abruzzi*, I reach Valona. Here, too, the welcome given me was enthusiastic. What misery! Tirana and Durazzo are in contrast two metropolitan centres. And yet the locality is very beautiful, the bay spacious, and the sea rich in fish and fishing facilities. After a few years of work all will be transformed. We were to go to Korcia, but the weather was bad and we put it off. We return to Durazzo. There a telegram from Anfuso reached me to announce that my presence in Rome during the evening was "extremely desirable". I cancel my visit to Scutari and return to Rome.

This is what had happened: the Duce, in my absence, made an about-face. He wants to support Germany at any cost in

the conflict which is now close at hand, and he wishes to send during the evening, through Attolico, a communication to the Germans stating this intention. In the meantime, the English have made an appeal to the Duce to settle the controversy peacefully.

Conference between Mussolini, myself, and Attolico. This is the substance: It is already too late to go back on the Germans. If this should happen the press of the whole world would say that Italy is cowardly, that she is not ready, and that she has drawn back in the face of the spectre of war. I try to debate the matter, but that is useless now. Mussolini holds very stubbornly to his idea. I use the British communication as a pretext to obtain a delay in any decision until to-morrow morning. I still have hope that my point of view will prevail, but, on the other hand, Attolico leaves the Palazzo Venezia discouraged and overwhelmed with grief.

AUGUST 21, 1939. To-day I have spoken clearly: I have cast aside every scruple. When I entered the room Mussolini confirmed his decision to go along with the Germans. "You, Duce, cannot and must not do it. The loyalty with which I have served you in carrying out the policy of the Axis warrants my speaking clearly to you now. I went to Salzburg in order to adopt a common line of action. I found myself face to face with a diktat. The Germans, not ourselves, have betrayed the alliance in which we were to have been partners, not servants. Tear up the Pact. Throw it in Hitler's face and Europe will recognize in you the natural leader of the anti-German crusade. Do you want me to go to Salzburg? Very well, I shall go and shall speak to the Germans as they should be spoken to. Hitler will not tell me to put out my cigarette as he did Schuschnigg." I told him these and other things. He was much impressed, and approved my proposal; namely to ask von Ribbentrop to come to the Brenner Pass, to speak frankly to him, and to reaffirm our rights as Axis partners. He does not want the Axis to collapse for the time being, but if it should, I would not be the one to weep over it.

We telephoned von Ribbentrop, who was unavailable for some time. Finally, at 5.30 p.m., I speak to him and tell him that I want to see him at the Brenner Pass. He says that he

cannot give me an answer at once because he "is waiting for an important message from Moscow (*sic!*) and will telephone to me during the evening". I report this to the Duce, who asks me, as he frequently does these days, what the tone of the conversation had been and how the German humour was.

Another conference with the Duce. He approves the document that I have drawn up for my discussion with von Ribbentrop and we settle on four points relating to possible eventualities. In my opinion three do not count, but one is fundamental: the one which insists that we shall not intervene if the conflict is provoked by an attack on Poland.

AUGUST 22, 1939. Last evening at 10.30 a new act opened. Von Ribbentrop telephoned that he would prefer to see me at Innsbruck rather than at the frontier, because he was to leave later for Moscow to sign a political pact with the Soviet Government.<sup>146</sup> I suspended all decisions and reported to the Duce. He agreed with me in feeling that my visit to Germany would no longer be timely. I spoke again with von Ribbentrop to tell him that our projected meeting would be postponed until his return from Moscow.

A long telephone conversation with the Duce. There is no doubt the Germans have struck a master blow. The European situation is upset. Can France and Great Britain, who have based all their anti-Axis policy on an alliance with the Soviets, count upon the unconditional support of the extremist masses? And will the system of encirclement by means of small States continue to prevail now that the Moscow balance has collapsed? Nevertheless, we must make no hasty decisions. We must wait, and, if possible, be ready ourselves to gain something in Croatia and Dalmatia. The Duce has set up an ad hoc army commanded by Graziani.<sup>147</sup> I have established contacts with our Croatian friends in Italy and in their own country.

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<sup>146</sup> Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact: On August 21st—two days after the conclusion of the Russo-German Trade Pact—it was announced in Berlin and Moscow that the two countries were about to sign a pact of non-aggression. Ribbentrop signed this Pact in Moscow on August 23rd. It came into effect at once and was to last for a minimum of 10 years. It has the distinction of being the only treaty signed by Russia which the Soviet Government has seriously attempted to execute.

<sup>147</sup> Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, Marquis of Neghelli: Viceroy of Ethiopia, 1936-7. Commander of the Italian Army in Libya, 1940-1. Minister of Defence in the "Republican Fascist" Government, 1943-5. Surrendered the Ligurian Army in 1945.

In diplomatic circles there is a great deal of confusion about the Russian action. In general the representatives of democratic countries are inclined to under-estimate the development. During the evening I see Percy Loraine, who would like an answer to the proposal he made on Sunday. My answer is vague, but not negative. In a general way I reaffirm our desire for peace and the disposition of the Duce to bring influence to bear on Hitler to continue negotiations.

AUGUST 23, 1939. The day is charged with electricity and full of threats. In the meantime anxiety about the German-Russian pact gives way to a more rational evaluation of this development, which to my way of thinking is not really fundamental. France and England trumpet to the four winds that they will intervene just the same in any eventual conflict. Japan protests. News from Tokyo signals their discontent, accentuated by the ignorance in which Japan has been kept up to this time.

The Duce followed my insistent suggestions. He authorized me to present to Percy Loraine a plan for a solution based on a preliminary return of Danzig to the Reich, after which there would be negotiations and a great peace conference. I do not know whether it was the emotion or the heat, but it is a fact that Percy Loraine fainted or almost fainted in my arms. He found a place to rest in the lavatory.

A meeting with François-Poncet, who was rather discouraged and pessimistic. However, he, too, without under-estimating the strength of Russian intervention, repeats that France will fight. Weizsäcker<sup>148</sup> telephones me from the Berghof<sup>149</sup> to inform me of Hitler's harsh answer to the British Ambassador. Another hope is gone.

A new meeting with the Duce with regard to my visit to the King. He does not wish me to show him the anti-German papers, and he proposes that I limit myself to informing him of the four points which, however, have not yet been communicated to the Germans. To-night the Duce is warlike. He talks of armies and of attacks. He received Pariani, who gave

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<sup>148</sup> Ernst von Weizsäcker: German Secretary of State, 1938-43. Ambassador to the Vatican, 1943-5.

<sup>149</sup> The Berghof: Hitler's fortified villa at Berchtesgaden near Munich.

him good news about the condition of the Army. Pariani is a traitor and a liar.

Phillips, in the evening, brings me a long message from Roosevelt for the King. It doesn't seem to me to make much sense.

AUGUST 24, 1939. I went to Sant' Anna di Valdieri to confer with the King. This visit was ostensibly to thank him for the collar of the Annunziata, but we hardly spoke about the collar. He wants news on the situation. I quickly inform him of what has happened, and, with him, I do not have to attack the Germans, since his own mind is in a state of open hostility towards them. I show him the four points agreed on with the Duce regarding our attitude. He approves, especially the third: the one about neutrality. In his judgment we are absolutely in no condition to wage war. The Army is in a "pitiful" state. The military review and the manoeuvres have fully revealed the unhappy state of unpreparedness of all our major formations. Even our frontier defence is insufficient. He has made thirty-two inspections and is convinced that the French can go through it with great ease.

The officers of the Italian Army are not qualified for the job, and our equipment is old and obsolete. To this must be added the state of mind of the Italians, which is distinctly anti-German. The peasants go into the Army cursing those "damn Germans". We must, therefore, in his opinion, await events and do nothing.

Six months of neutrality will give us greater strength. In any case, if supreme decisions should have to be taken, he would like to be in Rome "not to be left out", and he hopes that the Duce, in case of conflict, would give a command to the Prince of Piedmont. "Those two imbeciles Bergamo and Pistoia<sup>150</sup> have commands; my son should have one, too, for he has a head as good as that of the Duke of Aosta." He then added paternally that Prince Umberto likes me very much and that he always speaks of me with trust and hope.

AUGUST 25, 1939. During the night I had a telephone conversation with von Ribbentrop, who, at the instigation of

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<sup>150</sup> Bergamo and Pistoia: Sons of the Duke of Genoa, cousins of King Victor Emanuel III.

Hitler, makes it known that the situation is becoming "critical" because of the usual "Polish provocations". His tone is less decisive and overbearing than it was before. I speak to him of the advisability of our seeing each other. The answer is evasive.

Bastianini<sup>151</sup> informs me that during my absence the Duce's attitude has become furiously warlike.

Indeed this is the state of mind I find this morning. I make use of the King's opinions in order to dissuade him, and I succeed in getting him to approve a communication to Hitler announcing our non-intervention for the time being, pending a re-examination of our position and until such time as we have completed our preparations for war. I was very happy over this result, but the Duce calls me back to the Palazzo Venezia. He has changed his mind. He fears the bitter judgment of the Germans, and wants to intervene at once. It is useless to struggle. I submit and go back to the Palazzo Chigi, where consternation takes the place of the harmony that had reigned before.

Two p.m. I am told of a message from Hitler to the Duce. I go to the Palazzo Venezia with von Mackensen. The ambiguous message is couched in abstract language but gives one to understand that action will begin in a short time and asks for "Italian understanding". I use this phrase as a pretext to persuade the Duce to write to Hitler. We are not ready to go to war. We will go to war only if you will furnish us with all the war supplies and raw materials we need. It is not the kind of communication that I should have wanted to make, but it is something, anyway. The ice has been broken. I personally telephoned it to Attolico, who will relay the information to Hitler. The German reaction is cold.

At 9.30 p.m. von Mackensen brings a brief note in which we are requested to make a precise list of what we need. During the drive von Mackensen, who is hostile to the military adventure, requests me to make out a complete list. He hopes that this will put the brakes on his Government. In fact, there has

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<sup>151</sup> Giuseppe Bastianini: Ambassador to Poland, 1933-6, and to Great Britain 1939-40. Governor of Dalmatia, 1941. Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1942-3. Sentenced to death by the Fascists at Verona, but escaped to Switzerland in April, 1944. Captured by the Allies in June, 1945.

been an initial suspension: Roatta has telephoned that the mobilization and marching orders for this evening have been postponed.

AUGUST 26, 1939. Berlin is showering us with requests for the list of our needs. We convene at the Palazzo Venezia at ten o'clock with the Chiefs of Staff of the three armies and with Benni.<sup>152</sup> Before entering the Duce's room I remind these comrades of their responsibility. They must tell the whole truth on the extent of our stocks and not be criminally optimistic as they usually are. But they are all in precisely this state of mind, the most optimistic being Pariani.

Valle, on the other hand, is very much alive to his responsibility and is honest in his declarations.

We go over the list. It's enough to kill a bull—if a bull could read it. I remain alone with the Duce and we prepare a message to Hitler. We explain to him why it is that our needs are so vast, and we conclude by saying that Italy absolutely cannot enter the war without such supplies. The Duce makes some mention also of his political action to follow. In transmitting our request Attolico gets into trouble. (In a subsequent conference Attolico told me that this was not a mistake but that he had purposely done it in order to discourage the Germans from meeting our requests.) He asked for the immediate delivery of all the supplies, an impossible thing, since it involves 17,000,000 tons and 17,000 vehicles. I straightened things out. Soon Hitler's reply arrives. They can give us only iron, coal, and timber. Only a few anti-aircraft batteries. He indicates that he understands our situation and urges us to be friendly. He proposes to annihilate Poland and beat France and England without help.

After Mackensen went away the Duce prepared the answer. He expressed regrets at not being able to intervene. He again proposed a political solution. The Duce was really out of his wits. His military instinct and his sense of honour were leading him to war. Reason has now stopped him. But this hurts him very much. In the military field he was badly served by his advisers who, under the illusion of eternal peace, have fostered

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<sup>152</sup> Antonio S. Benni: Italian industrialist; Minister of Communications, Minister of Public Works.



dangerous illusions in him. Now he has had to confront the hard truth. And this, for the Duce, is a great blow.

However, Italy is saved from a great tragedy, that very tragedy which is about to overtake the German people. Hitler is entering the war with an alarming scarcity of equipment and with a divided country.

The message is sent to the Führer at eight o'clock. He announces that he will reply.

AUGUST 27, 1939. Halifax has informed me, in a very courteous tone, that the precautionary measures taken in the Mediterranean must not be interpreted as a prelude to hostilities against us. I answer in an equally courteous tone: I am very much interested in keeping in contact with London.

Hitler's answer: He seems still determined to go to war and asks us for three things: not to make known our decision to be neutral until it is absolutely necessary, to continue our military preparations in order to impress the French and British, to send agricultural and industrial workers to Germany. The Duce answers that he agrees to do all this and promises a reconsideration of our position after the first phase of the conflict. But when will this first phase end?

This morning he seemed satisfied with his decision "to stand looking out of the window". Meanwhile a singular incident takes place. The English communicate to us the text of the German proposals to London, about which there is a great to do but about which *we are entirely in the dark*. Hitler proposes to the English an alliance or something like it. And this was naturally without our knowledge. I was indignant and said so. The Duce is indignant, too, but does not show it. He still wants to maintain an attitude of solidarity with the Germans, at least outwardly. Naturally, I do not reveal our ignorance of this document to Percy Loraine, whom I advise not to reject the German proposals and to begin to negotiate, if only to gain time. We decide to make direct contact with Halifax and I telephone him.

This makes Percy Loraine and Halifax happy, the latter telling me that the British do not intend to reject the German offer but that at the same time they intend to safeguard existing commitments to Poland. The telephone conversation is charac-

terized by extreme cordiality on both sides. The situation, therefore, is gradually improving. I have had to struggle hard to persuade the Duce to act as he has. And I must add that in this move I have been completely abandoned by those who are concerned with telling him only what pleases him. To tell the truth is the least of their cares.

Starace, with his intellectual and moral shortsightedness, has the cheek to tell Mussolini that the Italian women are happy about the war because they are going to receive six lire a day and will not have the encumbrance of their husbands. How shameful! The Italian people do not deserve such a vulgar insult.

No matter. I am continuing my struggle alone because I am convinced that I am fighting for a good cause. War to-day, in view of our material situation and of our morale, would be a great misfortune. I intend to avoid it at all costs.

In my conference this afternoon I tried to find out whether the Duce shares my opinion. In his judgment the matter of the secret agreement with London is damaging to the Germans. He says that Hitler is acting in this fashion for fear that intervention on the part of the Duce will settle the crisis at the last moment, as was done last year at Munich. This would have the effect of raising his prestige, of which Hitler is jealous.

I am not sure that this explanation is correct. For me there is a simpler explanation, namely that the Germans are treacherous and deceitful. Any kind of alliance with them becomes a bad alliance in a little while. From London we are informed that the Cabinet meeting has adjourned but will reassemble to-morrow at twelve o'clock to decide on a definite answer to Hitler. Attolico has asked von Ribbentrop for information on the situation. He answered that there is little chance for peace and that Henderson has gone to London to express his own views only. Could there ever be a more revolting scoundrel than von Ribbentrop? But this is all to the good, because it helps to dissipate the last scruples the Duce still entertains. To-day he is relieved. He does not speak at all about what has happened.

Halifax has informed me in courteous terms of the precautionary measures that will be taken later in case intervention

should become necessary. He says that he will do only what is necessary after having awaited the development of the situation calmly. It has been hard to draw the Duce on to my side, but finally he is there, and has every intention of remaining there.

Hitler, at a secret meeting, has spoken to the Deputies of the Reichstag in strong terms. However, I do not know what he said, nor has Attolico been able to tell me.

AUGUST 28, 1939. The day was quiet, relatively speaking. There was a pause which, according to Magistrati, was caused by the German need to send troops to the western frontier. We had no direct contact with Berlin, where, in fact, Weizsäcker said to Attolico that there had been no communication in writing from the Führer to the British. Many cordial exchanges with the British, who have forewarned us of the tone of the answer that Henderson is preparing to take to Berlin in the evening. Once again they have appealed to the Duce to take pacifying action. But I do not believe that it is possible now to do more than has been done already. We might draw an unpleasant answer from the Germans. The Duce is now quite calm, as he always is after he has made a decision. He does not want to utter the word "neutrality", but it is this frame of mind that he has definitely reached. He even begins to hope that the struggle will be hard, long, and bloody for others, for he sees in this a possibility of great advantage for us.

During the night Percy Loraine sends me an outline of the British answer. It is not bad; in fact it leaves the door open to many possibilities. On the other hand, the British action has induced Poland to become more conciliatory. This is probably the key to the whole situation.

AUGUST 29, 1939. The Duce is restless. He would like to do something. Certain articles in the English press which speak of the necessity for Italian neutrality have had a bad effect on him. Meanwhile, he sets down a series of military and civilian emergency measures, which, in my opinion, need not be taken at this time. From Berlin, as well as from London, the news is better. Halifax telephones to tell me that the Führer has not rejected the British proposals and that there is still the possibility of a peaceful solution. Attolico, who has conferred with Ribbentrop, says more or less the same

thing. In the circumstances, I induce the Duce to send a telegram to Hitler to advise him to pursue negotiations. I inform Sir Percy Loraine of this and he is very pleased. I receive the wife of the German Ambassador to Spain, Baroness von Storer.<sup>153</sup> She is very pessimistic about the German internal situation. She believes that the outbreak of a total war might rapidly lead to Bolshevism. She says that the German people, who "are the most ungrateful people in the world", are at this moment agitated by very strong anti-Nazi currents.

Attolico has conferred with the Führer, who thanks him for the Duce's communication. Hitler has told the British that he is "ready to receive a Polish plenipotentiary", but that in spite of this he is still sceptical about the possibility of a negotiated solution, since the two armies are now within rifle range and the slightest incident may cause a clash.

AUGUST 30, 1939. My first thought to-day is the memory of my father. He would have been 63 years old if cruel death had not stopped the beating of his great heart. May God welcome him and may his generous soul be always near me.

The situation has again become embittered. The British answer does not close the door to future negotiations, but it does not give, nor could it give, the Germans all they ask for. Our only hope is in making direct contacts, but time passes, and the Polish plenipotentiary has not arrived in Berlin. Instead, news reaches us of general mobilization in Warsaw, and it is not the kind of news that is calculated to calm our nerves. I continue and multiply my contacts with the English.

Percy Loraine came to my house to-night and all day he has been ringing me up, but we have not succeeded in changing the situation.

The Duce is convinced "that the invasion will take place to-morrow". Naturally, the idea of a neutrality imposed on us weighs more and more upon him. Not being able to wage war, he makes all the necessary preparations so that in case of a peaceful solution he may be able to say that he would have waged it. Calls to arms, black-outs, requisitions, closing of cafés and amusement places. . . . All this carries with it

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<sup>153</sup> Baroness von Storer: Wife of German Ambassador to Spain, formerly in Egypt.

two grave dangers: one, external, since it would cause London and Paris to believe that we are preparing to attack, and hence induce them to take the initiative in moving against us; the other, internal, because it will alarm the population, which is more and more openly anti-German and opposed to war. Bocchini,<sup>154</sup> whom I have urged to send to the Duce *true* reports on the situation, is very pessimistic. He went so far as to tell me that in case of uprisings in connection with the preservation of neutrality the carabinieri and police would make common cause with the people.

AUGUST 31, 1939. An ugly awakening. Attolico telegraphs at nine, saying that the situation is desperate and that unless something new comes up there will be war in a few hours. I go quickly to the Palazzo Venezia. We must find a new solution. In agreement with the Duce I telephone Halifax to tell him that the Duce can intervene with Hitler only if he brings a fat prize: Danzig. Empty-handed he can do nothing. On his part, Lord Halifax asks me to bring pressure on Berlin, so that certain procedural difficulties may be overcome and direct contacts established between Germany and Poland.

I telephone this to Attolico, who is more and more pessimistic. After a while Halifax sends word that our proposal regarding Danzig cannot be adopted. The sky is becoming darker and darker.

I receive François-Poncet. The conversation has no object and is, therefore, vague and indefinite. The wish for peace is repeated on both sides. He seeks to learn what our attitude will be, but I make no reply. He is romantic, sad, and nostalgic. I must add also, sincere.

I see the Duce again. As a last resort, let us propose to France and Great Britain a conference for September 5, for the purpose of reviewing those clauses of the Treaty of Versailles which disturb Europe. I warmly support the proposal, if for no other reason than because it will widen the distance between us and Hitler, who wants no conferences and has said so many times. François-Poncet welcomes the proposal with satisfaction but with some scepticism. Percy Loraine

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<sup>154</sup> Arturo Bocchini; Senator. Chief of Police under Mussolini.

welcomes it with enthusiasm. Halifax receives it favourably, reserving the right to submit it to Chamberlain. I insist on a quick answer, since time is pressing. But the day passes by without communications of any kind. Not until 8.20 p.m. does the telephone central office inform us that London has cut its communications with Italy.

Here, then, are the consequences of the measures taken in the last few days, or, better, the consequences of too much publicity about the meagre results of the too many measures taken in the last few days. I go to inform the Duce. He is affected by it. "This is war," he says, "but to-morrow we shall declare in the Grand Council that we are not marching." To-morrow will be too late. The English and French may by then have committed acts that render any such declaration very difficult.

I propose that we call Percy Loraine and that I commit an indiscretion. If a scandal comes of it I am willing to be sacrificed, but the situation will be saved. The Duce approves. Percy Loraine comes to me. I acquaint him with what has happened and then, acting as if I can no longer contain my feelings, I say: "But why do you want to start the irreparable? Can't you understand that we shall never start a war against you and the French?" Percy Loraine is moved. He is on the verge of tears. He takes my two hands in his and says: "I have known this for fifteen days. And I communicated it by telegram to my Government. The measures of the last few days had shaken my faith. But I am happy to have come to the Palazzo Chigi to-night." He shook my hand again and left happy. I inform the Duce of this by telephone. In the meantime to lessen the alarm he had given orders for the lights of the city to be put on again.

From Berlin there arrives the German communiqué summarizing all that has happened in the last few days, including the proposals to Poland. These are very moderate, but there is something obscure in the whole German attitude. The proposals are advanced, but at the same time it is stated that they are no longer open to discussion. In any case, all discussion is superfluous. Hitler's programme announced to me at the Berghof is being applied point by point. To-night the attack

will begin, since August 31st was given as the last possible date. The Duce, however, thinks that negotiation is still possible. I do not, for I see in the communiqué a clarion call to war. At midnight Magistrati informs us that newspapers are being distributed free in Berlin with the headline: "Poland Refuses! Attack about to Begin!" In fact the attack begins at 5.25 a.m. I received news of this in the morning from Alfieri and immediately afterwards also from the Duce, who calls me to the Palazzo Venezia.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939. The Duce is calm. He has already decided not to intervene, and the struggle which has agitated his spirit during these last weeks has ceased. He telephones personally to Attolico urging him to entreat Hitler to send him a telegram releasing him from the obligations of the Alliance. He does not want to seem perfidious in the eyes of the German people, nor in the eyes of the Italian people, who, to tell the truth, do not show too many scruples, blinded as they are by anti-German hatred. Hitler sends the message through von Mackensen.

I receive François-Poncet and Sir Percy Loraine. It is now positive that France and England will do nothing against us. Nevertheless, I repeat to Poncet what I have said to Percy Loraine about our attitude. And this contact is useful to dissipate doubts. The French still insist that the Duce should take the initiative in the matter of the conference which we talked about yesterday. The English are more sceptical. But more sceptical still are we Italians, who know how matters stand and know about the rabid determination of the Germans to fight.

At three o'clock Council of Ministers. The Duce speaks briefly. Then I speak, adopting a clear-cut anti-German tone. The agenda for non-intervention by Italy, already drawn up since morning by the Duce himself, is approved. They all reacted very well. Even ministers like Starace and Alfieri, who had been among the most vociferous warmongers, embrace me and say that I have rendered a service to my country.

During the evening information arrives as to measures taken in London and Paris, which are the prelude to a declaration of war.

There also arrive the first bits of news on the victories achieved by the Germans. The Poles are withdrawing everywhere. I do not believe their resistance can last long.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1939. Yielding to French pressure we suggest to Berlin the possibilities of a conference. A mere hint for the information of Berlin. Contrary to what I expected, Hitler does not reject the proposal absolutely. I inform the Duce. I call in the French and British Ambassadors. I telephone personally to Lord Halifax and to Bonnet. (I note that my telephone call to Bonnet, to judge from the tone of his voice and from the words spoken, has produced lively satisfaction in Paris.) I find much good-will among the French, and maybe as much among the British, but with greater firmness. One condition is put forward: the evacuation of the Polish territories occupied by the Germans. This condition is confirmed by Lord Halifax after the meeting of the Cabinet.

It seems to me that nothing else need be done. It isn't my business to give Hitler advice that he would reject decisively, and maybe with contempt. I tell this to Halifax, to the two Ambassadors, and to the Duce, and, finally, I telephone to Berlin that unless the Germans advise us to the contrary we shall let the conversations lapse. The last note of hope has died. Daladier talks to the French Chamber in a decisive tone and his English colleagues do the same in London.

Nothing new here. The Duce is convinced of the necessity of remaining neutral, but he is not at all happy. Whenever he can he reverts to the possibility of action. The Italian people, however, are happy about the decisions taken.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1939. During the night I was awakened by the Ministry because Bonnet has asked Guariglia if we could not at least obtain a symbolic withdrawal of German forces from Poland. Nothing can be done. I throw the proposal in the waste-paper-basket without informing the Duce. But this shows that France is moving toward the great test without enthusiasm and full of uncertainty. A people like the French, heroic in self-defence, do not care for foreign lands and for nations too far away.

At eleven o'clock the news arrives that Great Britain has declared war on Germany. France does the same at 5 p.m.



But how can they fight this war? The German advance in Poland is overwhelming. It is not impossible for us to foresee a very rapid finish. In what way can France and England bring help to Poland? And when Poland is liquidated, will they want to continue a conflict for which there is no longer any reason? The Duce does not believe so. He believes, rather, that after a short struggle peace will be restored before the clash which in any case he considers impossible from a military point of view. I am not a military man. I do not know how the war will develop, but I know one thing—it will develop and it will be long, uncertain, and relentless. The participation of Great Britain makes this certain. England has made this declaration to Hitler. The war can end only with Hitler's elimination or the defeat of Britain.

On his way to the front Hitler calls Attolico to the Chancellery and entrusts him with greetings to the Duce. He was, I am told, calm and optimistic. He thinks that he will have Poland at his feet in four weeks, and in another four weeks will be able to concentrate his forces on the western front. He said nothing more. The Duce, who still prizes German friendship, was happy to know of Hitler's gesture.

SEPTEMBER 4, 1939. I accompany Mackensen to the Duce. He handed him a message from Hitler, reaffirming the conviction that the two regimes, bound together by a common destiny, must follow the same path. Hitler shows much confidence in the success of his enterprise. The Duce expresses full solidarity with Germany, and this is what he really feels. He gives in to my suggestions momentarily, but later, as is his way, returns to his former ideas. He is convinced that France does not want, and cannot fight, this war, that the French people are tired even before they begin to fight, and he is still dreaming of heroic undertakings against Yugoslavia which would bring him to the Rumanian oil, forgetting completely what our situation really is.

Favagrossa<sup>155</sup> said to-night that he would be glad if our present stocks permitted us to fight for three months. At times the Duce seems attracted to the idea of neutrality which would

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<sup>155</sup> General Umberto Favagrossa: Minister of War Production. Later member of Badoglio Cabinet, July–October, 1943.

permit us to gather economic and military strength, so that we could intervene effectively at the proper moment. But immediately afterwards he abandons this idea. The idea of joining the Germans attracts him. The battle that I have to fight with him is hard, and at times I feel like giving it up, but I must fight to the end. Otherwise it will mean the ruin of the country, the ruin of Fascism, and the ruin of the Duce himself.

After a meeting with the American Ambassador I succeed in getting permission for our transatlantic liners to leave port. They will be full to capacity, especially since the sinking of the *Athenia*. In addition to the economic advantages we shall also be relieved of much worry.

Von Papen has been intriguing in Ankara. I propose to send a letter of protest to Ribbentrop. This will be another cause of friction—and I hope for many more.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1939. I tell François-Poncet that the anti-Italian measures that are being taken at Tunis, Jibuti, Oran, etc., may lead to serious incidents. I shall telephone Bonnet. . . . I promptly received assurances that all these measures have been revoked. François-Poncet suggests that a meeting should take place between one of their officials and Giannini in order to eliminate any possibility of friction between Italy and France. I spoke to the Duce about it. After some hesitation he agreed. It is another step forward. François-Poncet believes that another attempt at mediation can be made by us after the occupation of Warsaw. To succeed, however, it would be necessary for Hitler to be endowed with the greatest wisdom—that sort of wisdom that does not desert one after victory. François-Poncet is doubtful because he knows the man and because, above all, he is afraid of the extremist influence of von Ribbentrop, whom he calls a dangerous imbecile.

Neutrality is beginning to bear fruit. The stock market quotations soar, the first orders to buy Italian industrial and financial stock come from France, boats resume their sailings at double the normal rates and are packed full. The Duce takes an interest in all this, but not a great deal as yet. He must be told that we need a long period of neutrality in order to enter the war later, as he desires, but not before the end of the year. General Carboni paints a very dark picture of our

military preparedness, our meagre resources, disorganized command, demoralization among the masses. Perhaps he exaggerates, but there is some truth in it.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1939. The Duce is in a more serene humour. He still believes that the opportunity of entering the game as a mediator will shortly present itself. Thus he is glad of the German successes in Poland, believing that they will shorten the conflict. To-day Cracow fell, and the German generals paid their respects at the tomb of Pilsudski. The Duce feels that this fine gesture could never have been made by the Germany of the Kaiser. The Polish Ambassador, whom I received this afternoon, was sad but not depressed. He says that the war will be continued until the last soldier is dead and that we shall yet have many surprises. What surprises, and when?

Conversation with Percy Loraine. I had asked him to let the Turks know that they keep up too much agitation against us and should keep quiet if they don't want all of the Balkans to catch fire. The British will do this, especially since Loraine has sent me a very honeyed note intimating that the British will take care to avoid incidents with our submarines.

Villani comes to speak to me in the name of Czaky about the danger of a German request for the passage of German troops through Hungary. He would oppose it, even by force of arms, although he would accept it if the Germans would agree to march against Rumania. This is one of Czaky's usual fantasies to which neither the Duce nor I give much credence. But we must keep an eye on him, since he is an irresponsible and vain man and also excitable—which means trouble.

Tacchi-Venturi brings a report of the Pope's desire for peace and his burning desire for Italian neutrality.

## SECTION III

September 7, 1939—June 10, 1940

### *INTO WAR*

MUSSOLINI expresses Italy's solidarity with Germany—The Pope desires Italy's neutrality—Germans occupy Warsaw—Increased German hostility to Italy—Hungary refuses right of passage to German troops—Bastianini appointed Ambassador to London—Germany's intention of attacking Rumania—Russia attacks Poland—Hitler's speech at Danzig—Mussolini's opinion on Russian intervention—Ribbentrop's journey to Moscow—Germany asks for naval assistance from Italy—Ciano wishes for the formation of a Balkan bloc—German-Russian agreement signed—Ciano visits Berlin to confer with Hitler—Hitler's proposal for a peace conference rejected—The evacuation of Germans from the Alto Adige is held up—France and Britain sign an agreement with Turkey—Death of Ciano's sister—Changes made in the Italian Government—Attempt on Hitler's life at Munich—Russia attacks Finland—British blockade in the Mediterranean—Ciano's speech in the Chamber of Fascios and Corporations—The King and Queen visit the Vatican—Himmler in Rome—The Pope returns the royal visit—The Albanians wish to liquidate King Zog—Ciano insists that Italy must not go to war—Italy sends help to Finland—Graziani shows pro-German sympathies—Proposal to make the Duke of Aosta King of Hungary—Trouble in Albania—Sir Percy Loraine declares Britain is now ready for war—Ciano receives Pavelic—Mussolini makes a speech in favour of war—Goering's dislike of Ciano—Relations with Britain become worse—Riccardi speaks on Italy's situation—British attack on the *Altmark*—Ciano receives Sumner Welles—Mussolini convinced of a German victory—Britain announces decision to confiscate all coal going from Germany to Italy—Ribbentrop visits Rome—Meeting between Hitler and Mussolini at the Brenner Pass—Conference with Count Teleki—Italy recognizes Wang Ching-wei's Government—Rumours of Ciano's impending dismissal—Occupation of Denmark and Norway by the Germans—Ciano reassures France and Britain on the subject of Italy's intervention—Attolico recalled from Berlin—Goering given the Collar of the Annunziata—Spain decides to remain neutral—Germany invades Holland and Belgium—Churchill becomes Prime Minister—Maginot Line pierced—President Roosevelt offers to mediate between Italy and the Allies—Italian High Command formed—Mussolini informs Hitler of his intention to declare war—Ciano assumes command of a bomber squadron—Italy declares war on the Allies.

SEPTEMBER 7, 1939. Nothing worth recording. Federzoni, Bottai,<sup>156</sup> and other fellow Fascists come to assure me of their unconditional support of the position taken by me on the question of the Alliance with Germany. They agree in finding legal, ethical, and political reasons for our attitude.

The Duce still has intermittent belligerent flashes. Whenever he reads an article that compares his policy with that of 1914 he reacts violently in favour of Germany. He speaks of further consultations with Hitler in order to make decisions about intervention. But he will not do anything.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1939. The Germans occupy Warsaw. The Duce is very much excited over the news. He sees in it some possibility of a rapid conclusion of the conflict through the proposals for agreement advanced by Hitler. But I do not believe that Hitler can have the wisdom to be moderate in victory, and I believe even less that the British, now that they have taken up the sword, are willing to sheathe it in dishonour.

Indeed, this was repeated to me by Percy Loraine in a conference I had with him—a conversation marked by a sincere desire for understanding with us and a calm, inexorable attitude to Germany. On the other hand, Poncet, who is getting ready to leave for France, seems more conciliatory. It is clear that there is some misunderstanding between London and Paris. The French recall too well the horrors of a war fought on their own territory to adopt without hesitation the British line of conduct.

SEPTEMBER 9, 1939. Villani reports that the Germans have asked for the free use of the railway at Kaya to attack Poland from the rear. The request, without threats this time, was made to-day by Ribbentrop over the telephone. Czaky informs us at four o'clock that the first German troops will be dispatched to-morrow at twelve. The Hungarians do not wish to yield to the demand. They are aware that this is a prelude to an actual occupation of the country. And they are right. On my return from Salzburg I indicated to the

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<sup>156</sup> Giuseppe Bottai: Member of the Grand Council. Minister of Education, 1936-43. Civil Commissioner in Greece. Editor of "Tribuna", 1943. Collaborated with Grandi in the overthrow of Mussolini. Warrant for his arrest issued October, 1944. Reported joined French Foreign Legion under name of Bataille in 1945.

Duce that the Germans were using the same language to the Hungarians that they had used six months previously to Poland. I accompanied Villani to the Duce. Villani is extremely anti-German. He talked frankly. He spoke of the menace that would hang over the world, including Italy, if Germany won the war. In Vienna they are already singing a song which says, "What we have we shall hold on to tightly, and to-morrow we shall go to Trieste." Hatred against Italy is always alive in the German mind, even though the Axis has for a time lulled it to sleep. The Duce was shaken. He advised the Hungarians to turn down the German demand as courteously as they could.

Then, in talking with me, the Duce violently condemned German conduct. But he wishes to be prudent, since a German victory cannot be completely discounted. I do not believe that he is wrong. I told him that I agreed with him, if the Germans would hurry. "If Germany wins before Christmas, well and good, otherwise she will lose the war."

SEPTEMBER 10, 1939. Long conversation—the Duce, myself, and Attolico. The Duce is especially desirous of knowing the state of mind of the German people as regards us. Attolico reports that if the highest circles, where the truth is known, are calm and measured in their judgments, the masses, unaware of what has taken place, are already beginning to give indications of increasing hostility. The words treachery and perjury are often repeated. The Duce is indignant, and wants Hitler to publish in Germany the telegram he sent the Duce which there is no reason to keep hidden from the Germans, since it is known to the rest of the world. Attolico also reports on the morale of Germany. It is quite low, even if military victories in Poland have galvanized it temporarily. During the conversation the Duce speaks with moderation and sometimes expresses himself against the Germans. Attolico, on leaving with me, shares my satisfaction at the change in Mussolini's psychology during these last weeks.

De Bono speaks of the situation of the Army and defines it as materially and morally disastrous. He, who has recently completed an inspection on the western front, is convinced that the present state of our defences could not stand up against a

French attack. He says that Pariani is a traitor and that Starace is a "sinister buffoon".

SEPTEMBER 11, 1939. Villani reports that the Hungarians have denied the right of passage to German forces and that von Ribbentrop has said nothing. He had asked for the transit of some materials, but I believe that this refusal will not be forgotten by the Germans and that at some time or other the Hungarians will have to pay for it. The English continue to use all sorts of blandishments on us. Percy Loraine came to make excuses for a hostile article written by Lloyd George and assured me that the British had pulled the Turks' ears for their hostile attitude toward us. As a matter of fact, the Turks have changed their tune in the last few days, especially in the press. Loraine also says that the Polish military position is not as bad as the Germans would make it appear. The Army is, for the most part, intact, and ready for the most severe tests. Can this be true? It is a fact that Warsaw has not yet been completely occupied, and recent experience has shown that fighting in cities is difficult.

To-day, for the first time, the Duce alluded to the possibility of making a public declaration of Italian neutrality. Naturally, he says, this will be done in agreement with the Germans, but meanwhile we have taken a big step forward.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1939. I received Villani early. He is very angry with the Germans. After they had accepted the refusal to allow their troops transit through Hungary, they told the "Glorious Slovak Army" to make the same request. The danger is still very great. According to Villani, the Slovaks are to the Germans what the jackals are to the hyenas—accomplices and pimps, with this added, that all the Slovakian minorities will raise their heads. Czaky refused in principle, and will confirm his refusal as soon as he gets orders from the Regent. The Duce, to whom I reported the matter, also found it ridiculous, and said that "against the glorious Slovakian Army it is necessary to oppose the not less glorious Hungarian Army".

Clodius,<sup>157</sup> the German economic expert, gave Giannini to understand that in Berlin they would postpone the expatriation

<sup>157</sup> Karl Clodius: Head of Economic section of German Foreign Ministry. Arrested in Rumania by the Russians in September, 1944.

of the Germans from Alto Adige until the end of the war. The proposal is slippery. I remember that at Berchtesgaden Hitler twice said that the withdrawal of the minorities from Alto Adige had touched his prestige and that for this reason he would be more unyielding with Poland. I have a suspicion that the Germans are preparing to put one over on us. The Duce is indignant. He, who was ready to make great concessions to the Germans on economic grounds, remains unyielding on the question of minorities. I myself speak to Clodius, but succeed in getting only this concession: that the problem be again submitted to examination in Berlin. Orders come from on high.

I accompany Grazzi to the Duce, who gives instructions for an understanding with Greece, a country too poor for us to covet.

SEPTEMBER 13, 1939. Important conversation with Percy Loraine, who hands me a very friendly letter from Lord Halifax thanking me for my part in the collaboration between our two countries and hoping that it will be continued in the future. After this Loraine says, stating that he is speaking only for himself: "From various quarters I hear it said that England is getting ready to make threats against Italy. This is false. We are going to leave everything to the judgment of the Duce. I should like to ask one thing only, that if a change of policy should take place we may be advised in time." I answered: "No change will take place. However, we will never take you by surprise. But I, too, want to tell you one thing—be careful not to dictate to us. Our position would stiffen immediately. Any attempt to dictate to us from within or without we should naturally resist with all the force at our disposal." I reported the conference to the Duce and he completely approved it. He has also given me instructions to answer Halifax's letter in a very cordial manner.

Bocchini reports on the state of mind of the country, which is gradually getting better with the spreading of news of the certainty of our neutrality. Nevertheless, the country is and remains fundamentally anti-German. Germanophiles can be counted on the fingers of one hand. They are objects of scorn. The Tevere, a very pro-German paper, is called The Rhine-



gold in Rome. Farinacci is obstinately pro-German. Can the Rhine also have passed through Cremona?

SEPTEMBER 14, 1939. I have answered Halifax, ending my letter with an allusion to possible action by the Duce to re-establish peace.

Magistrati has had a very important conference with Goering, who seems to have been persuaded of the advisability of Italy's remaining neutral. Such a position will help Germany more than our eventual entrance into the conflict. One surprising thing—Goering gave a hint of the impending intervention of Russia, which is to absorb a part of Poland. In fact, Russia is showing signs of restlessness. She is mobilizing numerous classes and Tass gives news of Polish boundary raids and provocations. How unimaginative people are when they intend to quarrel.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1939. I have persuaded the Duce to appoint an ambassador to London. This move will have considerable repercussions in the world and will do a great deal to establish our relations with Great Britain. I chose Bastianini, who, although he is not an eagle, is nevertheless a very trustworthy person and very much in accord with the policy of non-intervention. I am sure that he will render important services.

To-day the Duce has come back to his idea of constituting a bloc of Danubian Balkan countries with Italy at its head. I have drafted a telegram of instructions for Attolico. But during the evening Mussolini decided to put off the matter. He is thinking of postponing it until the end of German operations in Poland. He still believes it possible that the war can then be stopped, a European conference called, and a collective-security pact concluded among the six great European Powers. I am sorry that I do not agree with him this time. In order to bring this about it would be necessary for Hitler to show a moderation of which I do not believe him capable. And then Great Britain will go ahead, will carry on the war implacably to the end, until her own defeat or that of Germany. I anticipate a bitter, hard, long, very long conflict, which will end in victory for Great Britain.

Graziani is pessimistic about the condition of the Army. Pariani, on the other hand, is so optimistic and sure of him-

self as to make one wonder whether he may not be right. However, I do not myself believe him.

SEPTEMBER 16, 1939. François-Poncet has returned from Paris less optimistic than when he left here. The war will last long. It will be continued to the end at any sacrifice. This is the spirit that predominates in France. I have had a transcript made of the conversation and have sent a copy to the King. For us it contains unlimited smiles and polite words—a real serenade under the balcony. They are not sure of the situation and are afraid that one day they will have to settle with us. It now seems that Germany wants to attack Rumania. This disturbs the sleep of the French and British. But the fact that Russia is preparing to intervene should be even more disturbing. At this time an agreement has been reached with Japan, or is about to be reached. Russia can have a free hand in Europe. The Duce thinks that the Polish Ukraine will have an internal uprising, will proclaim a Bolshevik republic, and be federated with Moscow. Russian intervention will thus find justification.

Other happenings have to-day darkened the horizon of the democracies. The Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs is going to Moscow. Lindbergh makes a speech stating that whatever happens the United States must keep out of the struggle. The Soviet military attaché in Berlin returns to Moscow to be received by the highest officials of the Soviet Union. The situation is developing in such a way as to make the position of the democracies precarious.

I have also seen Sir Percy Loraine. He is quite disturbed, and the information he gave confirmed the approaching German thrust into Rumania. This means that fire will be set to the Balkans and will probably make our neutrality untenable.

SEPTEMBER 17, 1939. This evening the Russians entered Poland. On the pretext of suppressing disorders the Bolsheviks have crossed the frontiers. The Poles have put up some resistance, but what can they do at this hour? The Duce comments on the news by saying that the situation of the democracies is becoming increasingly complicated. Although they are bound to action by the Pact, he does not believe that France and England will declare war on Russia. Besides, the Duce does

not believe that Germany wants to invade Rumania. She will be satisfied with the imposition of economic servitude. I recall that during the Berghof conferences Hitler twice stated that King Carol will have to pay dearly for the murder of Codreanu,<sup>158</sup> who, on his mother's side, was of German blood. It would not surprise me if he wanted to settle accounts to-day.

Von Ribbentrop has talked to me over the telephone from the train of the Supreme Command in upper Silesia. He was calm and very cordial. He said that the Polish Army has already been liquidated and that within two or three days the last centres of resistance must give way. Russian intervention has taken place according to a prearranged plan. For the time being he was not able to say any more, but said that in a few days he would establish closer contact with me. Although I didn't say so I have been thinking about eventual proposals for peace. I, too, was very cordial toward him and asked him to convey to Hitler our congratulations and greetings.

Wieniawa has informed me of the Russian invasion. For the first time he was very much discouraged, his eyes were filled with tears and showed that he had not slept for some time.

SEPTEMBER 18, 1939. François-Poncet is gloomy. Although he does not want to admit it, he sees the situation in dark colours, but even to-day refuses to eliminate *a priori* the possibility of an understanding, should Hitler be prepared to make reasonable offers. He says that during the first six months there have been many Franco-British failures, but that, as in 1914, they would soon be corrected. He insisted that the course of the war is not quite similar to that of the other conflict and that it is not altogether certain, in view of the steady German progress, that six months more of war will be added to the first six months. The end may come quickly. Percy Loraine, whom I met at the Golf Club, was not happy. The sinking of *Courageux*, about which he had just received news, did not help to keep him in good humour.

A long conference with the Duce in the evening. I reported what I had learned from General Graziani. At the present time

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<sup>158</sup> Cornelius Zelea Codreanu: Founder and leader of Rumanian Iron Guard. Sentenced to 10 years hard labour in 1938 for inciting to revolt; shot and killed by prison guards some months later.

our first-line forces amount to only ten divisions. The thirty-five others are patched up, under strength, and ill-equipped. The Duce admitted that this was so and uttered bitter words about the real condition of the Army, which at this time is so lamentable. He boasts about our Air Force. He has figures given him by Valle which are absurdly optimistic. I advised him to start an investigation through the prefects: count the planes in the hangars and then add them up. This should not be an impossible undertaking. And yet we have still not succeeded in finding out the truth.

SEPTEMBER 19, 1939. The most important event of the day is Hitler's speech at Danzig, which may be called restrained and is perhaps the precursor of a peace offensive. His references to us are friendly and cordial, which at this time has a special value. The Duce was flattered that the Führer had mentioned him twice.

From Rumania comes the information that most of the Polish military and political leaders have been interned at the request of the Germans. How can we put any trust in our allies? Wieniawa, who had come to protest because Italian newspapers had spoken of the flight of Smigly-Rydz<sup>159</sup> to Rumania, wept when I furnished proof that the Marshal, who had promised to sign a victorious peace in Berlin, had really crossed the frontier. I assured him that we intend to be humane and that Polish refugees will find a home and help in Italian territory.

As we had been led to expect, the conference between Grazzi<sup>160</sup> and Metaxas has had good results. To-morrow we shall issue our first report, which will give France and Great Britain another piece of bad news, of which they have had plenty during the last few days.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1939. No information worth mentioning. Our friends the Croats are waking up and I feel that we should not neglect them. The occasion may come for us to carry out our Croat action with the unwilling complicity of Germany and without incurring the hostility of France and

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<sup>159</sup> Marshal Edward Smigly-Rydz: Commander-in-Chief of Polish Army. Took refuge in Rumania when Poland was overrun by the Germans. Arrested by Rumanian Government, 1940.

<sup>160</sup> Emanuele Grazzi: Italian Minister to Greece, 1939-40.

England, who might welcome this new barrier to the German advance. I have spoken of it to the Duce and he has given me a hundred thousand Swiss francs to intensify our propaganda.

A long and somewhat useless conversation with Helfand, who made every effort, now that he is almost an ally of the Germans, not to speak ill of them as he has done for so many years.

SEPTEMBER 21, 1939. Nothing new.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1939. The Duce was somewhat shocked by the killing of Calinescu.<sup>161</sup> He thinks there is some mysterious foreign plot at the bottom of it. The reaction to this has been so violent as to make one think. Only weak governments punish so severely.

I have spoken to Starace about the internal situation and told him that some of his methods are not of a kind to uproot anti-Fascism; they create it. In Via Veneto during the evening I saw an absolutely harmless person (a patriot and a Fascist) beaten by a small group of gangsters protected by the fact that they belonged to the Party and by the assurance that they would not be punished. They punished this Fascist, who has come from abroad, for having used "*lei*" [the polite form of address] rather than "*voi*".<sup>162</sup> My presence was sufficient to end the incident quickly, but the look of the small crowd that had gathered was anything but reassuring and clearly hostile to the so-called Fascists. This unwarranted action is harmful, and I am going to speak to the Duce about it. I am far from deploring beatings when they are well deserved, but it disgusted me to see idiotic and cowardly acts of violence. Unfortunately this has become a habit with so many mercenaries employed by the Party officials.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1939. After a long silence the Duce spoke to-day to the Hierarchy of Bologna. I saw him immediately after his speech. And, as often happens on these occasions, he was in a state of utter complacency. He read me what he

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<sup>161</sup> Armand Calinescu: Leader of Rumanian Peasant Party, pro-Nazi. Premier, 1939. Murdered by Iron Guard in September, 1939.

<sup>162</sup> "*Lei*" and "*voi*". The Fascist Government at this time was carrying out a plan to abolish the use of "*lei*" as a term of address, saying it was an imported term and savoured too much of the foreign influences to which Italy had been subjected in the past. The Fascists advocated the use of "*tu*" and "*voi*" as substitutes in the vain hope that if Italians were less polite they might be more warlike.

had said, and together we changed some parts that concerned our foreign policy. As regards internal affairs, I gave him my opinion as follows: Never has the country been more solidly behind the regime and the Duce. To speak of assassinations, plots, defeatism, etc., would be an attempt to give body to a shadow. The facts are quite otherwise. All the national resentment is directed against the person of Starace, who, in spite of having many good qualities, uses the wrong methods. "He is a vulgarian," the Duce said. "True," I answered. "Besides, we should not forget that he comes from Lecce, and that throughout all their history Milan, Turin, Rome, Florence, have never been governed by anyone so typically southern. These cities rebel." The Duce agreed. It would not surprise me to see a change made, which, in view of the existing state of affairs, would be a very useful thing.

I received the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, who asked me for the agrément of the new Russian Ambassador, and I also received the British Chargé d'Affaires, who spoke to me about routine matters.

Nitti has addressed a letter to the Duce, for the first time in eighteen years, I believe. I do not know its contents as yet.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1939. The Russian occupation of Poland has led the Duce to revise his previous optimistic judgment of the German situation. Indeed he now goes so far as to say that Hitler is bottled up, and that by making clever manœuvres the French and British may yet succeed in pitting Russia against Germany. The fact is that the Duce is in favour of peace only because the position of a neutral is not at all to his liking.

In the last few days he has repeated that a great nation cannot remain eternally in such a position without losing face, and that some day it should prepare to intervene. I cannot contradict him, because that would make matters worse. But he knows well by now the deplorably unprepared state of the army, and this morning, for the first time, he admitted that Pariani has not been telling the truth. In his opinion the Army has two glaring defects: being excessively attached to the dynasty and being too much concerned about questions of supply. The second is perhaps true, but there are quite other reasons for

the present state of utter confusion. Nevertheless, dismissing Pariani would be a good thing. I shall try to arrange for Soddu<sup>163</sup> to succeed him because I hold him in high esteem. Sebastiani<sup>164</sup> has said that the Duce wants to get rid of Valle, too, but he does not know how he is going to replace him. Why not with Ricci,<sup>165</sup> who is a good pilot and who has given evidence of being a fine organizer?

We have asked Attolico to consider the idea of forming a bloc of neutrals and at least outwardly trying to give the matter an economic aspect. He agrees and has spoken to Weizsäcker about it.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1939. "It is a good thing to make use of a small person to kill a large one, but it is a mistake to make use of a large one to liquidate a small one." Such is the diagnosis that the Duce has made of the Russian intervention invoked by Germany. He is more than ever convinced that Hitler will regret the day he brought the Russians into the heart of Europe. They have two weapons that make them still more terrible: pan-Slavic nationalism, with which they can bring pressure on the Balkans, and Communism, which is spreading rapidly among the proletariat all over the world, beginning with Germany itself.

François-Poncet tries to find out whether the gentle hint of peace contained in the Duce's speech has any concrete basis in some German offer. No. Nothing new for the time being. Then he talks pessimistically of the possibilities of peace, and adds that for us Fascists it must be easy to understand how a country can struggle, and perhaps be defeated, to uphold a point of honour. It was difficult to contradict him.

Villani speaks of Hungary. In spite of the state of alarm there is a good deal of calm determination to fight if the Germans should want to invade the country. Teleki calls Hitler a gangster and Czaky has sent word to me that von

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<sup>163</sup> General Ubaldo Soddu. Member of Italian General Staff. Resigned after failure to stop Greeks in Albania in 1941.

<sup>164</sup> Oswaldo Sebastiani: Mussolini's secretary; Italian Minister of Finance.

<sup>165</sup> Renato Ricci: Italian Minister of Corporations, 1939-43, nicknamed the "Earthquake". Editor of "Il Batilla", Leader of "Republican Fascist" militia, 1943. Captured 1945.

Ribbentrop has not concealed his hatred for me. I feel very much honoured.

Meeting to take up the matter of Alto Adige. Notwithstanding many objections made by the Germans, the exodus will begin again soon. Golden bridges. . . .

SEPTEMBER 26, 1939. We had already surmised during the last few days that something was being hatched between Moscow and Berlin, and to-day we have had confirmation from Rosso. It seems that von Ribbentrop has returned to Moscow to sign a genuine military alliance giving Bessarabia and Estonia to the Russians and the remaining part of Rumania to the Germans. Absolute silence from Berlin. As usual we are told nothing. I telephoned to Attolico to obtain information, and after a few hours he reported that von Ribbentrop's visit to Moscow seems confirmed. Hitler and his associates have returned to Berlin and, after making a statement to-morrow, he intends to go to the Western Front for the first time.

During the evening Moscow confirms the visit of von Ribbentrop, who will arrive at 4 p.m. to-morrow. Berlin is still silent. All this is not clear. The Germans prepare to strike without our knowledge—and from Vienna to Warsaw they have struck many times. I tell the Duce all this when he telephones for news, and I give him to understand that it is very difficult to go on like this. The alliance between Moscow and Berlin is a monstrous union against the letter and spirit of our Pact. It is anti-Rome and anti-Catholic. It is a return to barbarism, which it is our historic function to resist with every weapon and by every means. But will it be possible for us to do so? Or has not the outcome already been tragically decided?

SEPTEMBER 27, 1939. Berlin gives us absolutely no information. It is from the press agencies that we find out that von Ribbentrop has left for Moscow. But the scope of his visit is entirely unknown to us. Alleging that he had very little time at his disposal, von Ribbentrop refused to receive Attolico. This is bad. . . .

In the morning the Duce received Commander Pecori,<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Commander Pecori; Naval Attaché in Berlin.



our naval attaché at Berlin, in order to discuss with him some requests made by the Germans for naval assistance. They would like submarine supply stations from us, help in the location of Franco-British naval convoys, and, in addition, the transfer of some of their submarines for operation in the Mediterranean. The Duce at first favoured acceding to the German requests, including the last point, which is the most dangerous. With Cavagnari, who agrees with me entirely, we turned down the plan. Pecori doesn't say anything very new except that the Germans will begin mass production of submarines in April. They think they can produce about twenty every month, both of small and medium tonnage. Valentino, who has just come from Warsaw, tells his personal experiences. From what he says, the German Air Force is formidable. It is absolutely pitiless and has constantly dropped bombs on civil populations, but the German horror is surpassed a thousand times by the unspeakable horrors of the Bolshevik advance.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1939. Attolico reports that on Germany's part there is no opposition to our grouping all the neutral Danubian-Balkan States and Spain in a politico-economic system. The Duce still has many doubts. I, on the other hand, firmly believe in the desirability of such a move, which will give us a much broader political and economic base. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that we must wait and see what emerges from Ribbentrop's stay in Moscow before taking the initiative. We are still completely in the dark. Events in the Baltic States and in Bessarabia do not lead me to expect anything good. That man Ribbentrop is a sinister being and his influence on events is extremely dangerous.

I receive Villani. The Hungarians are restless. What can they do if the Russians enter Rumania? In my opinion, make no move. They are too weak and too exposed to get into the game until they are obliged to do so.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1939. We receive first through the press, and then from the Ambassadors, the texts of the Moscow agreements. They deal with an outright partition of Poland, although they contain something which allows us to foresee that on the German side at least there is some intention to do something later on in the way of face-saving. The Duce, however, is rather

pessimistic and believes that in view of present conditions it is almost impossible to attempt a peaceful solution.' He is right. Besides, it would not be admissible that the head of the Fascist party should support a solution that will put many millions of Polish Catholics into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

I see François-Poncet, who is indignant at what has been done and how it was done. He expresses a hope that the Duce will not intervene to recommend a solution that will be inexorably rejected by France and Great Britain. François-Poncet, in addition, sees the day drawing nearer and nearer when Italy will stand beside these two Powers to defend the liberty and dignity of Europe and its own national life as well. We speak of Franco-Italian relations. I voice severe criticism of the sordid French attitude toward us and he admits it. "What do you expect?" he adds. "The French are a strange people who would like to win the lottery without buying a ticket." I am preparing the draft of a declaration to serve as the legal basis for constituting a group of neutrals which I should like to unite around Italy.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1939. The Duce this morning was confirming his scepticism about the possibility of negotiation when I received a telephone call from Ribbentrop during the meeting of the Council of Ministers. He was more careful and more courteous than during other recent telephone conversations. He advanced three proposals: (1) a Mussolini-Hitler meeting possibly in Munich; (2) a visit to Berlin by me, where Hitler would like to talk to me about the whole situation; (3) a meeting with him at the Brenner frontier. The third solution was the least acceptable. I told the Duce that it would be well to discard, for the time being, any idea of a visit by him. A meeting might place him in a difficult position, both with regard to the world in the event of Hitler advancing absurd proposals, as is likely, and, also, with regard to Hitler himself, if the latter asked him for immediate military collaboration. Therefore, my journey to Berlin would have to be made.

I personally telephoned to Ribbentrop, who emphasizes that I must leave immediately to-day, at 6 p.m. I leave without any definite idea of what the Germans will propose, but I have the unshakable and deeply rooted determination to safe-

guard our freedom of action. I do not believe that I can bring from Berlin any contribution to the re-establishment of peace in Europe, but it is certain that I will fight like a lion to preserve peace for the Italian people.

OCTOBER 1, 1939. As usual I have summarized in a memorandum elsewhere the official account of my contacts with Hitler and other high officials of the Reich.

Here I only record some impressions. I found Hitler very serene. At Salzburg the inner struggle of this man, decided upon action but not yet sure of his means and of his calculations, was apparent. Now, on the other hand, he seems absolutely sure of himself. The ordeal he has met has given him confidence for future ordeals. He was wearing a green-grey jacket with his usual black trousers. His face bore traces of recent fatigue, but this was not reflected in the alertness of his mind. Hitler spoke for almost two hours and cited figure after figure without referring to a single note. With respect to Italy, his attitude was the same as before. What is past is past. From now on he looks to the future and wants to have us with him. All our suggestions as to military collaboration were frankly discussed. What most impressed me is his confidence in ultimate victory. Either he is bewitched, or he really is a genius. He outlines plans of action and cites dates with an assurance that does not admit of contradiction. Will he be proved right? In my opinion the game will not be as simple as he believes.

OCTOBER 2, 1939. France and Great Britain still have a momentous choice to make. If it is to be war, it will be an implacable war. The eyes of Hitler flash in a sinister fashion whenever he talks about ways and means of fighting. I return from Germany with the strong conviction that the first months of the war will lead the Germans to believe in victory, but that the longer it lasts the harder will it be.

Ribbentrop says nothing new and nothing original. He is an exaggerated echo of Hitler. For the present he is all out for the Russians. And he expresses himself in favour of the Communists in such an imprudent and vulgar way as to perplex anyone who listens to him.

The German people are resigned but determined. They will wage war and will wage it well, but they dream and hope for

peace. The applause with which I was received clearly reveals this state of mind.

All the Italians in Germany heartily hate the Germans, but they are firmly convinced, without exception, that Hitler will win the war.

Goering did not show up. The tragi-comedy of his collar of the Order of the Annunziata. At this juncture in the year 1939 we are about to have a second *affaire du Collier*.

OCTOBER 3, 1939. I give the Duce my report and go into all the details verbally. He does not share Hitler's confidence in victory. The French and English will hold firm. His conclusions are based on information given him by our military experts. And, besides, why hide it? He is somewhat bitter about Hitler's sudden rise to fame. He would be greatly pleased if Hitler were slowed down, and, hoping this, predicts that it will come about.

Nevertheless for many months to come our attitude cannot be changed, we must remain neutral and go on preparing.

OCTOBER 4, 1939. For the first time in six years Mussolini speaks to me about sacking Starace. I encourage him, and Muti's name is mentioned as the one to fill Starace's place. Muti is valiant and faithful, still without sufficient political experience, it is true. But he is full of natural genius and has a strong will. If he is appointed he will do well, if for no other reason than that he will be the successor of Starace, who is hated and detested.

A meeting with the French and British Ambassadors. I give them some information on the results of my interviews in Berlin. In accord with Mussolini, I gave them to understand that the German conditions are hard, possibly acceptable, but in any case hard. At heart the Duce wishes the European giants to fight bitterly against one another, in spite of all that is said about our will to peace. I throw oil on the flames.

OCTOBER 5, 1939. Hitler announces that to-morrow morning he will let us have the text of the speech he is to deliver at twelve o'clock. According to Attolico, appearances have been saved with respect to Poland. It is certain that to-morrow will be the fatal day; either peace or real war. I should not be surprised if Hitler became a little more yielding. Determined

as he is to meet events with force, a bit of the old socialist yet remains in him, making him hesitate at the prospect of a European conflagration. Not so Ribbentrop. He is an aristocrat, or, rather, a parvenu, and shedding the blood of the people does not worry him. The case of Hitler is different. He was a worker, and he still has some indefinite repugnance to bloodshed. He would prefer victories without bloodshed. For these reasons I think that a faint though very feeble hope still exists.

OCTOBER 6, 1939. I accompany von Mackensen to the Duce to deliver the text of Hitler's speech. The Duce speaks in a very cordial tone, and tells him that Italian military preparations are proceeding at a sure and rapid pace. If the war should continue, in the spring he will be able to give help rather than receive it.

When we were alone, the Duce read Hitler's speech and commented on it very favourably. He judges it to be so useful and effective in arousing emotion as to bring about a change in the international situation. He indulges himself in such a strain of wishful thinking that in the evening he telephones me to say that to his way of thinking the war is now ended.

I do not share this optimism. There is no doubt that the speech will create some emotion in the enemy camp, which is divided by currents of pacifism. But what does Hitler offer except fair words? And how much are his fair words worth? I still have too much respect for France and England to believe that they will fall into Hitler's trap. The war did not end to-day; it will soon start in earnest.

OCTOBER 7, 1939. The first reactions to Hitler's speech are coming in. Though they are negative, I cannot find in them that violence which would seem to be called for by the real essence of the speech. The Polish Ambassador himself, while lightly reaffirming his old uncompromising attitude, this morning did not seem to reject *a priori* the discussion of German proposals.

Mussolini would like to do something that would get us into the game. He feels left out, and this pains him. The moment will come, but for the time being we must avoid taking any active steps which would have little chance of success.

I gave the Duce a curriculum vitæ of Muti. He was impressed

by it. Muti is something of a warrior of the early Middle Ages.

OCTOBER 8, 1939. Nothing new, except for an increase of the Franco-British protests.

Only two voices were heard in England in favour of the conference proposed by Hitler: those of Lloyd George and Bernard Shaw. Which proves conclusively that the English consider Hitler's proposals absolutely unacceptable.

OCTOBER 9, 1939. I have never seen the Duce so depressed as he was this morning. He now realizes that the prosecution of the war is inevitable, and he feels all the discomfort of having to stay out of it. He did what is for him an exceptional thing: unburdened his feelings to me. "The Italians," he said, "after having heard my warlike propaganda for eighteen years, cannot understand how I can become the herald of peace, now that Europe is in flames. There is no other explanation except the military unpreparedness of the country, but even for this I am made responsible—me, mind you—who have always proclaimed the importance of our armed forces." He vented his feeling on Hitler, who, he said, placed him in a situation where he had to "throw overboard so many men" and had made even the Duce himself appear in a bad light. He is right. Nothing to object to in this. In the country rumours are being spread against everything and everybody, himself included. But he has always acted in good faith. He was betrayed by four or five individuals whom he inadvisedly put into high positions and whom he still has not punished severely.

I am very depressed. Maria is ill in bed. She seemed thin and bloodless, as if made of ivory. May God help her. I love her very much. She is the only connection with my passing youth.

OCTOBER 10, 1939. I listen to Daladier's speech on the radio. It seems to me clearly uncompromising, even though it is measured and correct in form. Mussolini is not of this opinion. In fact, he telephones me with a rather satisfied air that "the French are beginning to weaken". Frankly, I don't believe this. We shall see.

OCTOBER 11, 1939. Reactions to Daladier's speech confirm my first impression of its uncompromising character. In fact, Mussolini does not talk about it any longer. François-

Poncet also is of the opinion that war cannot now be controlled and that operations will soon have a much broader scope. He does not deny the difficulties of the undertaking, but has faith in the victory of France—true confidence. I distinctly sense an accent of conviction in his words.

The German Government continues to put a thousand difficulties in the way of the evacuation of the Germans from Alto Adige. Requests and pretensions pile up every day. They ask quite seriously if they may take even the door-knobs and the locks with them. In the meantime the local situation becomes more disturbed. The people who know that they must leave are beginning to consider themselves somewhat outside the law. Some incidents have already occurred. I call Mackensen and ask him to deal with the question as a political issue. We must act quickly. The Italians are following this question with great interest and they cannot justify the delays, especially since, under Russian pressure, the Germans got 80,000 people out of the Baltic States in a few hours.

OCTOBER 12, 1939. Bombelles sends an interesting report on the situation in Croatia. Agitation is strong, and the money supplied by us has intensified it to the point of causing serious incidents between the mobilized Croatian troops and their Serbian officers. He considers the situation nearly ripe for intervention. I speak to the Duce about it. I, too, feel that we must strike a blow in Croatia but with the consent of, or at least without the opposition of, France and England. We must make these people understand that it is to their interest if we barricade the path against the Germans, and if we save Hungary from the double pressure of Germany and Russia. Nevertheless, we must not be in a hurry. It is an operation which will succeed, but it must be conducted like the one in Albania.

Chamberlain speaks. It does not seem to me that his speech contains any new elements when compared with Daladier's. As a matter of fact, the first impression I received was rather of a more determined intransigence.

OCTOBER 13, 1939. Chamberlain's speech makes the hopes of even the most obstinate pacifists sink. One recognizes the traditional British decision in the voice of the old statesman. The Duce, after having read the original text, concludes that

every possibility for an understanding has now disappeared. He was preparing to make a statement, but is putting it off for the time being. Well done. This is the real moment to keep one's mouth shut.

In Germany the speech was received with indignation and fury. Attolico telegraphs that it has turned out to be a call to war, and von Mackensen expresses himself in similar terms. The latter comes in the name of von Ribbentrop to request the support of our press on some specific points of the polemic. Von Mackensen is rather depressed and, notwithstanding all his efforts, he does not entirely succeed in hiding his profound antipathy toward von Ribbentrop, whom he considers the person most responsible for the war.

OCTOBER 14, 1939. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 15, 1939. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 16, 1939. In the afternoon the Duce holds forth at length on the state of the armed forces. He has to face the facts, and the situation known to everybody can no longer be ignored even by him. Finally, he said that he wishes to dismiss Pariani and Valle. This would be wise. He also said there will be no possibility of entering the war before the first of June or July, and even then we shall have at most three months' supplies. Under such conditions it would be folly to enter the conflict. We must wait, and I am sure that the Duce, who feels his present position acutely, will know how to wait until the best interests of Italy can be served by such a move.

All over the world a deadly silence seems to presage bad news. When the Germans shut themselves up in their silent resentment they are preparing a blow. I believe that the cannons will be heard soon. The Duce was very much affected by certain documents and information on Russia which have come into our possession, and wants to begin a press campaign to explain to the Italians that Bolshevism is dead and that in its place is a kind of Slavic Fascism. I try to dissuade him. Russian friendship is a potion that the Italians would not drink too willingly, especially if served in a German beaker, as it would now have to be served.

OCTOBER 17, 1939. Maria's condition has become



worse and the doctors have lost hope of saving her. May the Madonna accomplish the miracle. There is nothing sadder than to witness the gradual extinction of a youthful life which has been filled with purity and goodness. This year fate is trying me harshly.

OCTOBER 18, 1939. To-night passed tragically. Maria's death seemed imminent and unavoidable. Later she rallied and is now somewhat better. There is a slender thread of hope, but I still cling to it. The mercy of the Virgin may have descended upon a creature who richly deserves it.

Hitler sent his Ambassador to express his good wishes for Maria's health, and von Ribbentrop telegraphed.

With Clodius I have worked out the final clauses for the agreement on the Alto Adige, which will be signed to-morrow. I have also tried to satisfy some of Hitler's requests of an economic nature in order to facilitate the transfer. I believe we must do everything possible for the Germans short of giving them our complete military support.

The Duce confirms his intention of instituting changes within the Party by substituting the excellent Muti for Starace. Better late than never.

OCTOBER 19, 1939. Maria continues to improve, and this leads me to entertain high hopes.

To-day France and Great Britain signed an agreement with Turkey. This does not displease me, because it means Germany is losing a point. Poncet telephones to tell me, under instructions from Paris, that the agreement has no anti-Italian character, but is aimed only at the preservation of the status quo in the eastern Mediterranean. I don't know what this assurance is worth, but it is just as well that it has been given. Changes are about to take place in the Government. The Duce is getting ready to make my friends Muti, Pavolini, Riccardi<sup>167</sup> and Ricci Ministers. He dismisses Alfieri, and this displeases me, because he has been a good comrade. I shall try to keep him afloat politically, and if I do not succeed in having him appointed President of the Chamber, I should like to appoint him Ambassador to the Holy See. Starace will perhaps

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<sup>167</sup> Raffaello Riccardi: Italian Minister of Currency and Exchange, 1939-43. Arrested 1943. Later freed by the Germans.

pass into my jurisdiction as Governor of the Ægean, but I like this less. Pariani and Valle, too, are finally leaving.

OCTOBER 20, 1939. Maria is worse. I now feel that misfortune is inevitable and close at hand. Anguish wrings my heart, because of my own sorrow and the deep, silent sorrow that has overwhelmed my mother.

OCTOBER 21, 1939. The gravity of Maria's illness continues unabated. Slight and transitory improvements render the sad fact more evident, just as the lightning shows more clearly for a moment the horror of the tempest. Nothing is sadder than to have to watch this slow agony and to look on smilingly, because Maria, who is in complete possession of her intellectual powers, must not suspect the fate that awaits her. Up to now she has not realized that death is ready to strike her, and this proves again that divine Providence is truly infinite.

OCTOBER 22, 1939. At six minutes past midnight, the same hour at which my father passed into the shadows, Maria passed away. After a long and painful agony she breathed her last serenely, receiving the consolations of religion. But she had been unconscious for over half an hour.

This is a great blow which numbs me. Maria was a good sister. Always near me spiritually, but always discreet and thoughtful, she was for me a link with my past. Our early youth was spent in absolute intimacy, as was proper in the modest family of an officer. For a long time we slept in the same room, ate our meals together with the spontaneity of two colts who feed out of the same manger. Later on, even though life did separate us physically for a long time, it could never really separate us. Maria was proud, loyal, honest, and straight as a sword. The ailment which consumed her perhaps at times influenced her personality, but it could not in the least change the profound characteristics of her soul. Everybody who knew her never failed to be impressed by them. Universal and deep sorrow is felt for her. Melancholy dominates my spirit, and the void which has come into my heart with her disappearance can be filled neither by time nor events. A kiss to you, Maria. May God receive you in His great arms as you deserve. Adieu.

OCTOBER 23, 1939. At Leghorn for Maria's funeral. Once again, overwhelmed by sorrow, I have passed through

the city of my childhood between rows of people who appeared to be suffering with me. Maria has been placed in the Purificazione Cemetery in a niche under that in which my father rests. When, a little later in the day, I returned alone to the cemetery to say an affectionate farewell to my dear ones, it seemed less hard for me to abandon my sister in that sad place, since our great, unforgettable father had received her there. And he will watch over her as he watched over us when we were children.

OCTOBER 24, 1939. Life goes on its way. At the Ministry an audience with the Duce, who was paternal in his attitude. Visits, conversations, the press, telegrams. . . . But when, after a fall, we begin to walk again, the slope seems harder to climb, and one feels that the burden weighing on one's shoulders has increased in weight.

OCTOBER 25, 1939. The Duce plans to write a letter to Hitler to tell him that as things stand Italy represents for Germany an economic and moral reserve, but that later on she may also play a military role. I do not see the need of this document, but the Duce is a little restless and wants to do something. He also speaks of a meeting of the Grand Council to be held soon with the idea of informing it exactly as to what has happened. He also alludes to the timeliness of a very important speech by me to inform the country of what is taking place. If I tell the truth it will be difficult to make the point which the Duce intends and which he impresses upon me—that is, that the Axis and the Alliance with Germany still exist and are fully operative.

OCTOBER 26, 1939. The speech that Ribbentrop delivered at Danzig has had damaging repercussions. It was a mediocre repetition of Hitler's speech. Loraine said that Ribbentrop is a second-rate man with second-hand ideas. I agree with him.

Mussolini speaks again of the speech that I am to make on December 16, and, in listing the arguments that I must employ to establish the reasons for our attitude, the Duce, while still wishing to maintain a pro-German line, makes the sternest charges against the Germans. It will be a difficult task, but taking advantage of his state of mind I shall try to make a

speech that will be convincing, save appearances as far as possible, but tell the truth and so widen the breach between ourselves and the Germans.

This morning the Duce said that Hitler is creating grave risks for himself, since, forced by circumstances, he is putting all power in the hands of the military leaders. Arms in the hands of the people and power in the hands of the officers are distinctly unfavourable for any dictatorship. The Duce discovered this in September, when anti-Fascism found in our barracks the best environment in which to grow and prosper. In time of war the influence of the Party becomes more and more ephemeral. Recently we have had many proofs of this.

OCTOBER 27, 1939. Changes are about to take place in high positions, both in the Party and in the various Ministries. The Duce has decided in favour of Muti, but he is still somewhat doubtful as to Valle's successor. He is thinking of General Pinna. I advised him against this, because this man is too intimately linked with the work of his predecessor. We must choose a new man. I suggest Pricolo.<sup>168</sup> For the Navy, too, the Duce asked me for a nomination, and he advances the name of Admiral Riccardi.<sup>169</sup> My father did not hold him in high esteem because he tried to shirk his duty during the last war. I think the best thing to do is to keep Cavagnari, who has done very well. The Duce agrees. The changes will take place on Monday.

In the international field nothing new. Increasingly strong rumours reach us about an imminent German offensive in the West. Mussolini does not believe that this will take place. On the contrary, I believe it will.

OCTOBER 28, 1939. Nothing new. This year's celebration of the anniversary of the March on Rome is somewhat lifeless and lacking in enthusiasm. The Duce is the most dissatisfied and restless person among us all. He feels that events have betrayed both hopes and promises. What does the future hold in store? That depends upon us here. I still believe that if we can be calm and if we wait and overcome our impatience,

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<sup>168</sup> General Francesco Pricolo: Italian Chief of Staff for Air, 1940.

<sup>169</sup> Admiral Arturo Riccardi: Chief of Naval Staff and Under-Secretary for the Navy, 1940. On active service in 1941.

we can yet turn this disadvantageous situation to our profit. But calm and caution are indispensable conditions for the attainment of these ends.

OCTOBER 29, 1939. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 30, 1939. The Duce tells me that yesterday, returning from an excursion to Pomezia, he informed Starace that he had been sacked. On receiving the news Starace objected to being replaced by Muti, and he proposed the nomination of certain Fascist party officials who were his friends. But the Duce did not bite and insisted on Muti. "After all," he said, "he was not able to make any substantiated accusation worthy of consideration. Only provincial gossip. I think Starace is jealous of Muti because Muti has more decorations than he."

I spoke at length with Muti, outlining directives to him. Muti will follow me like a child. In spite of my growing scepticism about men in general, Muti is one of the few people that I believe to be sincere.

Starace is sent to command the militia. Even there he will make trouble, but certainly less.

OCTOBER 31, 1939. A bombshell bursts with the change in the Ministries. There is general enthusiasm because of the departure of Starace and expressions of good wishes for the new Ministers. Starace and Muti meet in my office and the meeting is almost cordial.

NOVEMBER 1, 1939. Nothing new in foreign affairs.

NOVEMBER 2, 1939. At Leghorn to visit my two dear ones. In the evening in Florence, where the Fascist militia received me with considerable warmth.

NOVEMBER 3, 1939. The new Ministry is called, sotto voce, the "Ciano cabinet". Job hunters begin to crowd round me. I am also asked for opinions on foreign policy. How absurd!

NOVEMBER 4, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 5, 1939. Nothing significant is happening either in Italy or outside. In Berlin, Attolico has had a conference with von Ribbentrop, who has shown himself, as usual, an out-and-out warmonger. He said that just now there is no way to have peace but to make war. All this, beautified by

many phrases about the certainty of a quick victory, about which events make us more and more sceptical every day.

NOVEMBER 6, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 7, 1939. Lively protest by the Duce at the Comintern manifesto attacking the middle classes of the warring countries, including Germany and Italy. At my suggestion his protest takes shape in a strong article in the *Giornale d'Italia*. The friction with Russia certainly does not help to improve relations with Berlin. But other elements play their part in this. In the first place, the fact that Ribbentrop continues to say that England entered the war because she learned in time that Italy would remain neutral. This is a lie. If Ribbentrop is trying to find a justification for his errors, he makes a new and dangerous mistake. I wrote Attolico to clear up this point immediately. If Ribbentrop insists, we may move toward some real unpleasantness. This morning the Duce was indignant.

News from Germany, Austria, and Prague all confirm a definite worsening in their internal situation.

Conversation with Soddu. He is very well informed. He says that the present condition of our Army is much worse than had been thought. He excludes any possibility of being ready in April; maybe in October at the very earliest. Soddu, too, agrees with me in believing that Germany will inevitably be beaten. He will speak about this to the Duce.

NOVEMBER 8, 1939. The Duce is very much impressed by what General Liotta told him about German alcoholism. The General went so far as to say that the "German peril can be held back only by means of the alcoholization of Germany", and "that the world of to-morrow will belong to the people who drink water". However, I have wondered whether it is worth while taking that Sicilian clodhopper, Liotta, seriously. Because he offered some bottles of bad wine to the Germans, he believes that he has won their confidence.

The overtures for peace made by the rulers of Belgium and Holland have not had any success, at least for the time being.

Conference with Badoglio, who comes to put himself at my disposal. He is pessimistic about the condition of our armed forces and affirms that if we work very hard for two years we may be in a position to intervene if, in the meantime, the enemy

exhaust themselves. Badoglio is deeply neutral but on the whole would prefer to fight against the Germans rather than with them.

NOVEMBER 9, 1939. The attempt on Hitler's life at Munich leaves everybody quite sceptical, and Mussolini is more sceptical than anyone else. In reality many aspects of the affair do not altogether convince us of the accuracy of the account given in the papers. Either it is a master plot on the part of the police, with the precise purpose of creating anti-British sentiment in the German people who are quite indifferent, or, if the attempted murder is real, it is a family brawl of people belonging to the inner circle of the Nazi party; perhaps a carry-over of what took place on June 30th, which cannot have been forgotten in Munich. The Duce has tried hard to compose a telegram expressing his delight that peril has been avoided. He wanted it to be warm, but not too warm, because in his opinion no Italian feels any great joy over the fact that Hitler has escaped death—least of all the Duce.

Information from several sources leads us to believe that a German attack in Belgium and Holland is close at hand. Attolico acts as the mouthpiece for these reports, but without guaranteeing them. The Belgian Ambassador in Rome is very much concerned and feels that the alarm finds considerable justification in the intensified German preparation. On the other hand, François-Poncet is sceptical.

I have spoken clearly to von Mackensen and have given instructions to Attolico on the situation which is developing in the Alto Adige, where the action of the German propagandists is carried on contrary to our agreements for the emigration of people of non-Italian origin. People speak guardedly of the return of the Alto Adige to the Reich, and hopes are aroused that may unduly embitter a situation which is growing increasingly tense. If the French and British were clever, this would be a fine moment to create a major incident between us and the Germans.

NOVEMBER 10, 1939. Nothing new. Speculation continues on both sides regarding the attempt on Hitler's life in Munich, many aspects of which are undeniably mysterious.

NOVEMBER 11, 1939. Rumours about an imminent

German invasion of Belgium and Holland become more intensified. News of this sort has now been coming from too many quarters not to be given serious consideration. However, I must say two things: that nothing on this matter has been communicated to me from Berlin, and that, as a matter of fact, Hitler and Ribbentrop have always specifically excluded an attack on the neutrals for moral and technical reasons. But, considering what has already happened, anything is possible. . . .

Mussolini does not believe that such an attack will be made, but he admits that, if it did take place, Germany would be totally discredited, and that in Italy there would be a great wave of hatred for Germany which would have to be taken into account. The Duce in these last few days, probably because of the situation in Alto Adige, expresses himself as more and more definitely anti-German.

NOVEMBER 12, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 13, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 14, 1939. I receive the Prince of Hesse. I find him rather depressed, in spite of his efforts to appear in his usual good humour. He confirms reports that the German offensive will take place soon on the French front and not through Holland and Belgium.

As regards the frontier incident with Holland, he secretly informs me that it was the result of a raid that the Gestapo made in Holland in order to capture, as it did, the head of the British Intelligence Service.

He tells me little or nothing about the attempt on Hitler's life at Munich. He maintains that those responsible must be sought in the circle of Roehm's<sup>170</sup> old friends.

NOVEMBER 15, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 16, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 17, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 18, 1939. The Prince of Piedmont hands me a small personal gift—the evening dress button for the collar of the Annunziata. He takes the opportunity of discussing certain matters with me: (1) he is pleased by the changes in the Ministries and the Party. He does not conceal his dislike

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<sup>170</sup> Ernst Roehm: Nazi leader, executed in the blood bath of June, 1934.



of Starace and of his followers and their ways; (2) the troops are always fraternizing with the French on the French frontier, while dislike of the Germans is becoming more and more acute. The Germans also contribute to this. Their military attaché, Rintelen, arrived unexpectedly among the Italian troops and began to ask indiscreet questions with the air of one who is making an inspection of the front. This was resented by our soldiers, especially by the officers; (3) Hesse showed himself to be rather concerned about the situation. I also mentioned the possibility of replacing Attolico in Berlin, but the Prince, naturally, let the matter drop.

NOVEMBER 19, 1939. To Turin; hunted on the Medici estate.

NOVEMBER 20, 1939. News from Prague leads us to believe that the situation is more difficult than is admitted in official reports. The Duce is satisfied, especially as he thinks that a Bohemian crisis will retard or, perhaps, prevent the projected offensive on the Western Front. For Mussolini, the idea of Hitler's waging war, and, worse still, winning it, is altogether unbearable. He gives instructions to our Consul at Prague to advise the Bohemians to side with the Communists. This will make German repression harder and will accentuate the causes of disagreement between Moscow and Berlin.

NOVEMBER 21, 1939. Matters go badly in the Alto Adige. The Germans, in attempting to carry out the agreement, are definitely preparing to hold a plebiscite. This would not matter, provided the German population left immediately after having expressed their choice. Instead, nothing of the kind is to happen. They are to have the privilege of remaining as long as three years, and nothing leads us to hope that on the German side there is any intention of shortening the time. Mussolini says that he does not quite understand. To-day he affirmed that on this question we might get into a conflict with the Reich. Meanwhile, he strengthens the police and the carabinieri and also increases the frontier forces.

All this is satisfactory, because the chasm which separates us from Germany is becoming wider from day to day, even in the Duce's mind. This is a good moment for Franco-British propaganda to get to work. If an incident were to break out

in the Alto Adige our relations with Berlin would become extremely precarious.

NOVEMBER 22, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 23, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 24, 1939. I take steps at the French Embassy and at the office of the British Chargé d'Affaires to protest against the new blockade manœuvres. This protest is couched in mild terms. The Englishman takes this into account, but Poncet, who is always very brilliant, argues, saying that it is not to him but to the German Ambassador that we ought to protest, since the floating mines are the cause of the tightening of the blockade. Then, since with the French, as with Heaven, reconciliation is always possible, he says that he will intervene so that the transport of German coal, which in reality is what interests us, will be allowed to go on without too many difficulties.

NOVEMBER 25, 1939. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 26, 1939. At Dresden the Statthalter said, after a banquet which was attended by our Consul, that Germany must fear friends that betray her even more than her enemies. I telephoned to von Mackensen and told him that if there is anyone who has been betrayed it is not Germany. He sought to excuse the Statthalter, saying that after the banquet he probably was not in a lucid state of mind.

The Duce is indignant because of what was said in Dresden. The German star is beginning to pale even in his mind, and this is what counts most.

NOVEMBER 27, 1939. Attolico reports that a German Government official has protested because, according to him, our Navy serves the interests of the French and British, and he went so far as to say that some submarine might open fire on us also. A genuine diplomatic blunder, typical of a German mind, which I use effectively to exasperate the Duce.

I have finished writing the speech that I am to deliver on December 16th—a very insidious speech which, if accepted in its present form by the Duce, will definitely destroy or at least undermine our relations with Germany, which are materially worsening.

NOVEMBER 28, 1939. The Duce completely approves

of the speech, which, unless something new comes up, will be delivered on December 16th. He speaks to me about the new President of the Chamber. He had already chosen de Francisci.<sup>171</sup> I dissuade him. It does not seem to me right that my father's place should be filled by a mediocre individual who has been made by Fascism. I speak in favour of the appointment of Grandi, and the Duce decides it this way.

In the international field, nothing new except the increasing tension between Russia and Finland, which forecasts a coming attack. What is the German attitude? One thing is sure, and that is that for many years Germany has been supplying arms to the Finns. I was careful to find a way of informing the Russians of this.

NOVEMBER 29, 1939. No important news.

NOVEMBER 30, 1939. Russia has attacked Finland.

A long conference with Sir Percy Loraine, who has returned from London. I vigorously protest against the blockade and tell him that it is utterly idiotic to compromise Anglo-Italian relations for questions of secondary importance. I have the impression that he has done his best, but that he has encountered difficulties of practical application. He speaks with serene confidence about the general situation. Germany, which had announced many offensive plans on sea, on land, and in the air, has not seriously carried out any of them. England is stronger every day, and more resolved to carry the war on to its logical conclusion—the end of that regime which has transformed Germany into a permanent peril to European peace.

Toward us a great deal of cordiality. He was also the bearer of a letter addressed to me by Halifax which was very courteous but not of particular importance.

DECEMBER 1, 1939. I saw Lord Lloyd, who has just arrived from a trip to the Balkans. He had nothing special to tell me except to confirm what the Ambassador had told me yesterday: that Great Britain was determined to carry the war to full victory.

The German Ambassador again asks me what we intend to do on the question of the blockade. Ribbentrop showers us

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<sup>171</sup> Senator de Francisci: Rector of the University of Naples.

with telegrams, and wants to create a crisis between us and London at any cost. What annoys me most is that he gave orders to Mackensen to see the Duce. I have to take him there to-morrow. Such meetings always have a dangerous side to them.

General Carboni, new head of the Italian Military Intelligence, is to meet with Canaris<sup>172</sup> in Munich. My recommendation to him is to make no serious commitment. He must say yes to the Germans in small matters so that we can say no in big ones.

DECEMBER 2, 1939. This morning I called together Ricci, Riccardi, and Host Venturi<sup>173</sup> to form an office of co-ordination for economic warfare. All three are 100 per cent anti-German, but I thought it advisable to bring them up to date by telling them briefly what happened at Salzburg and later. They were indignant, and I am certain that they will put forth their best efforts to straighten out matters with France and Great Britain and accentuate differences with Germany.

The Duce received von Mackensen. When the Duce talks to Germans he can't refrain from adopting a warlike attitude. And this morning he did it again, though not too openly. It is clear that Ribbentrop, who is beginning to flounder in the bog, is making every effort to drag us into the war. It would be as idiotic not to see through his game as it would be criminal to play with him. In any event, the Duce has made no specific commitments and, what is more important, he clearly reaffirmed the anti-Bolshevist trend of our policy.

In reality, the whole of Italy is indignant about Russian aggression against Finland, and it is only a sense of discipline that checks public demonstrations. I have prepared a letter for Lord Halifax on the question of the blockade. It is a fact that the blockade is hampering our shipping, and, given the Duce's still uncertain state of mind, it is advisable to avoid any incident that might provoke a crisis between us and London.

DECEMBER 3, 1939. The Duce and I have drawn up

<sup>172</sup> Admiral Walter Wilhelm Canaris: Head of German Secret Intelligence (Abwehr), 1938-44. Believed executed for complicity in anti-Hitler plot, 1945.

<sup>173</sup> Giovanni Host Venturi: Minister of Communications.

the agenda to be voted on at the next meeting of the Grand Council. The Duce is very insistent on the insertion of a clause to reaffirm that relations between Rome and Berlin are unchanged. I do not object, provided there is another clause which reaffirms quite as categorically that we are going to continue our policy of watchful and armed waiting.

Mussolini is more and more restless. He feels that he is out of this great struggle and in one way or another he would like to find a way to get into it. He intends, after the Council meeting, to send a letter to Hitler asking him to find a diplomatic solution. The Duce is ready to support it. If, on the other hand, Hitler is planning to continue the war, we will intervene in 1942, as our obligations demand. All this seems useless and dangerous to me, but it is not yet the moment to contradict him. I shall do so if he wants to carry out his project. At this moment there is nothing better than to remain inactive, absolutely inactive. This gives us all sorts of advantages, even along moral lines. Besides, we should not delude ourselves in any way. The Italian people are growing ever more anti-German. Even their violent anti-Bolshevist demonstrations can be interpreted as anti-German manifestations. The fate of the Finns would be of much less concern to the Italians if the Russians were not from all practical points of view the allies of Germany.

DECEMBER 4, 1939. In all Italian cities there are sporadic demonstrations by students in favour of Finland and against Russia. But we must not forget that the people say "Death to Russia" and really mean "Death to Germany".

I showed the Duce the report of an Italian, Volpato, the only foreigner permitted to live in Posen.<sup>174</sup> With a simplicity which accentuates the horror of the facts, he describes all that the Germans are doing: unmentionable atrocities without excuse. The Duce himself was indignant; he advised me to see to it that by indirect channels the American and French newspapers get the contents of the report. The world must know.

Starace brings for our perusal a report from his information

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<sup>174</sup> Posen. Ciano refers to the fact that the Germans did not permit foreigners to live in the restricted industrial area of Posen.

service in which it is said that the German Embassy is preparing news of a serious break between me and the Duce. This is the tail end of an old manoeuvre which began after Salzburg. Starace, who wanted to give proof of his loyalty, told me that he had absolutely no intention of showing it to the Duce. I know that old fox and fear his friendship. I told him that the report left me perfectly indifferent, and that, as a matter of fact, I advised him to give the paper to the Duce. He persisted in saying he would not. But it was he who persisted, which leaves me absolutely out of it.

DECEMBER 5, 1939. Conference with Dr. Ley.<sup>175</sup> His visit to Rome bears a perfect German imprint. No one had asked him to bother us. He had insisted on seeing Cronetti<sup>176</sup> in Venice, and as soon as he received our official permission he hurried to Rome to confer with the Duce and with me, to give his visit a distinctly political flavour.

Ley is a heavy person who in the past was a well-known drunkard living in a brothel in Cologne. He is not the best choice to carry out diplomatic missions. He repeats like a gramophone record whatever his master has charged him to say, and shies with noticeable fright when asked an unexpected question. I have had a stenographic note made of the conference. There is nothing sensational in what he said, but he hinted at several very important things: (1) that an attack on Holland is being prepared on the pretext that Holland is not abiding by her declaration of neutrality; (2) that Russia has been given more or less of a free hand in Sweden and Bessarabia; (3) that Germany foresees conflict with Russia within a few years; (4) that Hitler's only thought is to continue the war.

Percy Loraine is going to Malta to try to influence the Admiralty to make its blockade less irksome.

DECEMBER 6, 1939. François-Poncet informs me that the Allies have decided not to interfere with the coal we are importing from Germany. We have a long conversation, in

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<sup>175</sup> Dr. Robert Ley: Nazi Minister of Labour. Captured by Allies in June, 1945. Listed as a War Criminal, August, 1945. Committed suicide while awaiting trial at Nuremberg, October, 1945.

<sup>176</sup> Cronetti: Fascist Party journalist.

which the only important point is that the French admit the possibility of the Germans breaking through the Maginot Line, though they believe they can beat them subsequently in the open country. Paris, too, holds that the German offensive is imminent. I saw Attolico, who came from Berlin. He can tell me very little, since the Germans now say very little to us. To him they say less than to the others. He confirms what everybody is saying, and that is that the German people are more and more unfavourable to Italy, even though in some quarters our intervention in the spring is considered certain—a certainty presumably based on a conversation Mussolini had with Mackensen a month ago.

DECEMBER 7, 1939. Nothing new. During the evening I made a long report to the Grand Council. I asked the Duce for permission to read all the documents and he consented. What I revealed made a great impression; and since I said I believed that the Grand Council would keep a secret . . . I am sure that all I said yesterday evening will slowly trickle down to the country and will have the effect it should.

DECEMBER 8, 1939. The Duce was quite satisfied with my report. On the other hand, he was furious at Balbo, who continues to carry on a press campaign in the *Corriere Padano* which is so openly anti-Communist that it implies an indirect attack on Germany. "He thinks," said the Duce in my presence and in the presence of Pavolini, "that he can fish in troubled waters at home but he should remember that I am in a position to put everyone, without exception, to the wall."

I receive the Finnish Minister, who thanks me for the moral assistance given to his country, and who asks for arms and possibly specialists. No objection on our part to the sending of arms; some planes have already been sent. This, however, is possible only so long as Germany will permit the traffic. But how much longer will Germany consent? The Minister replies that that side of the question is settled, and confides to me that Germany herself has supplied arms to Finland, turning over to her certain stocks, especially from the Polish war booty. This proves that the German-Bolshevist understanding is not so complete as they would have us believe in Berlin and in Moscow. In reality, distrust, contempt, and hatred dominate.

DECEMBER 9, 1939. To-day I was somewhat troubled because the Duce wanted me to insert in my speech a statement on the relations between Italy and Russia which, if not couched in cordial terms, should at least be civil. This did not seem very timely to me and was in sharp contrast to all the rest of the speech. To settle the question, a note arrived during the evening from the new Soviet Ambassador notifying us that as he had been recalled to Moscow he would be unable to present his credentials on the 12th, as had been arranged. I informed the Duce, stressing the extraordinary discourtesy of such a gesture. His reaction was immediate, and if my speech is going to be changed it will now be to make the pill more bitter still.

However, the Duce's attitude has always been vacillating and fundamentally he is still in favour of Germany. He said to-day that the time will soon come when we shall demand Corsica and Tunisia from France. I answered that in that event we must be ready, because this would inevitably mean war. He was quite pleased with an English article which said that the Italian people might fight at the side of Germany for reasons of honour. This is also his point of view, and even when there are a thousand voices to the contrary, a single anonymous voice saying that he is right is sufficient, and he will cling to it and overlook, indeed deny, the others. I cannot conceal the fact that this state of mind troubles me.

DECEMBER 10, 1939. Mussolini is becoming more and more exasperated by the British blockade. He threatens counter-measures and revenge. I believe, on the contrary, that we can do very little about it. Either we have the power to oppose, which means war, or else we keep our mouths shut and try to solve difficulties in a friendly way. The Duce is more and more uneasy, but he proudly declares that he is calm. The position of playing a neutral part in a Europe that is fighting or getting ready to fight humiliates him. But I can't see a way out. Our absolute military unpreparedness, our lack of adequate supplies, and our economic dependence will force us to remain in our present position for a long time, which doesn't displease me in the least. The day will come when everybody will see the great advantages that non-belligerency has given Italy.



DECEMBER 11, 1939. Nothing new.

DECEMBER 12, 1939. When the Germans discovered that we were working the Lokris mine, our only source of nickel, they asked us for it. I thought I would find strong opposition from the Duce. Instead there was nothing of the sort. If he is not ready to grant the request, he is at least disposed to yield a part of the produce. It is all very well, but it is enlightening to see how these gentlemen act—that is, as bullies and robbers. How long are we going to stand this?

DECEMBER 13, 1939. A long conference with the King about the Albanian decoration. We then have a general discussion. He tells me nothing new, but makes it clear that he is a neutral and an out-and-out anti-German. Neither does he like the French, and he rates their military efficiency lightly. He considers it likely, although contrary to his hopes, that the German military offensive will have positive results. The Duce instructs me to introduce into my speech, in addition to a confirmation of our Alliance with Germany, a reference to his speech to the Fascist militia. It is necessary to make clear to the press that this reference is important because of what was said in regard to international obligations, and not because of what was said against France, otherwise we are going to engulf ourselves in an argument that might become dangerous.

Von Mackensen returns to the matter of the nickel mine. I answer with abundant proof that we can give up only a part, which will involve a small amount of mineral. He is not satisfied, and I am less satisfied than he.

DECEMBER 14, 1939. In the Chamber they commemorate my father's death. Grandi delivers a very noble oration, and the Duce utters words which, for him, are rare. I had never seen the hall without my father. To-day a great laurel wreath had been placed on his chair, but never was he so near to me as he was to-day.

DECEMBER 15, 1939. Nothing new.

DECEMBER 16, 1939. I spoke to the Chamber. My speech was a great success, even if everybody did not discern the subtle anti-German poison which permeated it. The first impression seemed merely anti-Bolshevist, but in substance it was anti-German. They tell me that the German Ambassador

listened to it in silence, and at times was not able to conceal his disappointment. Good.

During the evening I saw Sir Percy Loraine, who is highly satisfied and pays me compliments.

DECEMBER 17, 1939. The speech continues to be talked about. It has had much success in Italy as well as abroad. Politically, it went a long way. If it was difficult formerly to persuade the Italians to march side by side with the Germans, it is impossible now despite their pledged word, since they know the whole truth and what is happening behind the scenes.

Everybody knows and understands that Germany has betrayed us twice.

DECEMBER 18, 1939. Nothing new. There are still many comments and all of them good, including those from Berlin, where, nevertheless, they are swallowing a bitter pill.

I have finished making arrangements for the King's visit to the Pope and for a return visit—an event without precedent. It will cause a lot of talk, and it will not help to draw Germany closer to us. The fight against Catholicism in Germany is being carried on pitilessly and idiotically.

DECEMBER 19, 1939. I had thought that François-Poncet would have received my speech more sympathetically. Instead, during the visit that he paid me yesterday he did not complain about what I had said but emphasized the point that my reference to solidarity with Germany was too strongly expressed. To tell the truth, I do not know in what part of my speech this occurred. The English were more intuitive and have given my speech a welcome which caution alone has restrained. As to the Italians, they were the most intelligent of all, and have completely understood my way of talking. They consider my speech to be the real funeral of the Axis.

A Finnish representative asks to purchase arms. There is no objection to this within the limits of our capacity and on condition that they themselves manage the transportation.

Wieniawa accuses me of being "the worst assassin in the world." According to him, in my speech I suppressed 7,000,000 Poles, who, by his estimate, are 25,000,000.

A long conference with Albanian senators. They present their objections and their wishes. Insignificant things of a

personal and local character, about which we can give them satisfaction. I am convinced, especially from what they themselves have said, that matters in Albania are moving in a satisfactory manner.

DECEMBER 20, 1939. The Albanians take their oath in the Senate. The Duce was beside himself because the Osservatore Romano announced the visit of the Italian Royal Family with only a brief news article. "This is how the Vatican always acts. It's hard to make them understand." The Duce inveighs against the Pope. "I'm becoming more and more of a Ghibelline. In the crest of Forlì there is a white eagle." Another thing that enrages the Duce is that the British have stopped our ships. I don't know what to do about this. On the other hand, as long as we advertise our solidarity with Berlin, it is difficult for the British not to apply the rules of blockade against us. To-morrow I shall accompany Percy Loraine to the Duce. It is just as well for him to see Mussolini's state of mind for himself.

DECEMBER 21, 1939. Visit of the King and Queen to the Holy See. The King is in a good humour and congratulates me on my speech. He is glad that I have given some annoyance to the Germans, who, in his opinion, and as he hopes, are destined to lose the war, above all if they cannot count on the full support of Russia. The visit takes place without complications, but there is some commotion when the Pope starts making an address. The King is always very easily embarrassed and does not know what to do. He was afraid that he had to answer it, and as he does not excel in oratory he turned to me in despair. I made him a sign not to move and he calmed down. The Pope, in the conversation he had with the King, criticized Germany violently for its persecution of the Church.

I see Himmler<sup>177</sup> and have quite an unimportant conversation with him. I tried to obtain information about the offensive, but the Germans now distrust me and the information was not given. The Duce was closeted with Himmler for two hours yesterday, and the latter left the Mappamondo hall well satisfied. What can Mussolini have promised him? In talking to

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<sup>177</sup> Heinrich Himmler: Head of the Gestapo. Captured by British in Germany in May, 1945. Committed suicide the same evening.

me about the conference the Duce said that Himmler was anti-Russian and somewhat discouraged and that he told Mussolini "that he would never allow a German defeat to take place". This is a great deal, but I fear that the conversation has gone much beyond this.

DECEMBER 22, 1939. I confer at length with Percy Loraine on the question of the blockade. We must find a solution before some incident occurs which compromises the situation and shifts the problem from the commercial field to that of prestige, in which event conciliation will be more difficult.

DECEMBER 23, 1939. A long conversation with Antonescu,<sup>178</sup> who was sent here by the King of Rumania to explore the ground and learn our intentions if the Russians attack the Rumanian frontier. I answered, reaffirming our anti-Bolshevist point of view, but avoided any commitments which might bind us to Rumania at a moment when we must have the maximum freedom of action. The Rumanians would like us to work on the Hungarians, because any Hungarian threat to the Rumanian rear would oblige the Rumanians to come to an agreement with the Russians. This may be possible, although the stubbornness of Czaky does not give us much hope.

I gave von Mackensen a document of exceptional gravity which comes to us from Prague. It is a résumé of a lecture given by the vice-mayor of Prague, Dr. Pfitzner, a German, in which German imperialistic objectives are bluntly revealed. It refers not only to the Germans' intention of taking possession of the Alto Adige and Trieste, but to their ambition of conquering the whole plain of Lombardy.

Mussolini was highly indignant, and, since the document contained many threats against Russia, he ordered me to send the statement with an unsigned note to the Soviet Ambassador in Paris. I told Mackensen that if a thing like this were known by the Italian people an utterly uncontrollable movement of hostility to Germany would arise. Mackensen was greatly impressed. Every time he is invited to confer with me now he trembles, because he well understands my policy.

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<sup>178</sup> Marshal Ion Antonescu: Head of Rumanian State, 1940; arranged abdication of King Carol. Antonescu's Government was overthrown by King Michael's orders in August, 1944. He was arrested by the Russians in Rumania in September, 1944.

DECEMBER 24, 1939. François-Poncet tells me that the French Government is worried over the situation in the Balkans, but this is only his personal opinion. Weygand's army, which is ready in Syria, will intervene to repel any threat, be it German or Russian, but there is no intention in Paris of doing anything without previous agreement with Italy, whose paramount interests in the zone are recognized. I cannot for the moment assume any obligations, but it is important to note that France has taken the initiative.

DECEMBER 25, 1939. Nothing new.

The holiday makes me feel more sadly the absence of those who are no more.

DECEMBER 26, 1939. We talk about Rumania with Mussolini. He is in favour of my transmitting the Rumanian demand to Hungary, and he is even ready, in case of Russian aggression, to give the Rumanians military support of the kind we gave to Franco in Spain. The report on the speech of the vice-mayor of Prague has made him more and more distrustful of the Germans. Now, for the first time, he wants the Germans defeated, and since Marras, military attaché to Berlin, indicated that from good sources he has had news of the imminent invasion of Holland and Belgium, the Duce invites me secretly to inform the diplomatic representatives of the two countries concerned. Mussolini always has in mind the occupation of Croatia, which seems to me possible, and I told him that it should be undertaken only in agreement with the French and the British.

I inform Antonescu of our programme in connection with eventual Russo-Balkan complications. He is very happy about it. He tells me that he learned from the French Ambassador at Bucharest that Great Britain has recently sent a note to Paris couched in the following terms: (1) Italy must again be won over to the British side; (2) Italy wants to go into the Balkans; (3) if this is the condition for the realization of the first point, England is ready to let her go ahead. This is very probable. But it is a good sign that the British are in this frame of mind.

DECEMBER 27, 1939. The Germans are greatly alarmed about the Prague speech, so much so that they have called von

Mackensen to Berlin for a conference. Naturally they deny the speech, but it has its logical foundation in a whole mass of German literature which has for a long time spread propaganda along the same lines expressed by Dr. Pfitzner, the vice-mayor of Prague.

The Pope has conferred on me the Order of the Golden Spur. More than the decoration itself, I was pleased with the telegram sent by Cardinal Maglione, in which he praises my work in favour of the "most noble cause of peace", and of the rapprochement between Church and State. On the whole, Mussolini tends to underrate the importance of the Pope's visit to the King, and never so much as in the last few days does he delight in calling himself "an unbeliever". On the other hand, the event is very pleasing to the Italian people, who attribute an anti-German and anti-Bolshevist flavour to the visit.

A long conference with Bocchini. He complained especially about the restlessness of the Duce, which has already been noticed by all his colleagues, and he even went so far as to say that the Duce should take an intensive anti-syphilitic cure, because Bocchini claims that Mussolini's psychic condition is due to a recurrence of this old illness. It surprised and annoyed me very much that Bocchini should have said this, although I myself recognize the fact that Mussolini's present contradictory behaviour is very upsetting to anyone who works with him.

Verlaçi asks for my approval to ". . . take the initiative against King Zog, who, when he is dead, will be less embarrassing than he is to-day". The matter does not interest us, and I answer that only the Albanians can be the judges of the life of another Albanian.

DECEMBER 28, 1939. The Pope visited the King. Everything went off according to plan. The King was pleased by the visit, and after the meeting he told me that the Pope repeated many times that he would like to improve relations with Germany but that this is rendered impossible by the increasingly uncompromising German attitude. Immediately after the visit I went to the Duce. To-day, also, he was making ironical comments on the visit of the Pope, and depreciated its importance.

Czaky lets us know that he will be in Venice during the first week of January. I shall try to get him to understand that it is, above all, to the interest of Hungary to agree with Rumania now that the Russian danger is coming closer and becoming more obvious. If Hungary wants to live and even prosper moderately she must avoid becoming a mosaic state more than she is to-day. Past experience proves this to be very dangerous.

We have recalled Rosso from Moscow. As long as the Soviets do not send an ambassador to Rome our Embassy will also be headed by a *chargé d'affaires*. Our decision does not improve relations with Russia or with Germany. The ridiculous and lying telegram of Stalin to Ribbentrop, in which Stalin speaks of Russian and German blood shed in common (but where?), proves that the collusion between Bolshevism and Nazism is becoming more and more intimate and deep. So much the worse for them, because Russia and Germany will suffer the same fate.

DECEMBER 29, 1939. I see Besnard,<sup>179</sup> the French representative at the next Fascist Exhibition in 1942. We discuss politics, but he does not say anything interesting. Ex-ambassadors generally flatter themselves into believing that they are in a position to accomplish what the ambassadors at present in charge of the affairs of their countries cannot do, and which they did not do themselves when they might have done it.

Sir Percy Loraine informs me that the British Government intends to act more generously toward Italy as regards the blockade. This is all to the good and will serve to calm the Duce's nervous tension.

I am somewhat alarmed over Muti's behaviour. He is a fine fellow, loyal and devoted, but one who has more guts than brains. And besides, he cannot resist the temptation of basing all his actions on personal considerations. For him to favour Dick and to deceive Tom is everything. The rest does not count. He does not see the essence of a problem. Unintentionally he acts on his own account and heeds less and less what I say. He thinks that he has won over Mussolini, but he does not understand that the latter is the coldest judge of men; not

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<sup>179</sup> René Besnard: Lawyer; former French Ambassador to Italy.

contradicting his interlocutor, not arguing, never opposing, he destroys individuals by the most pitiless methods. Muti thinks that he is playing cat with Mussolini, but he is really the mouse. It may be that I am giving substance to a shadow, but I am afraid that the Duce is in a quandary as to the situation of the Party, and I should not like Muti to have the ephemeral and fleeting life of a political meteor.

DECEMBER 30, 1939. I bring Verlaçi to the Duce. He makes a very optimistic report on the situation in Albania and asks for a greater concentration of powers in the Italian Lieutenancy. Public power must be divided as follows: the government of Tirana is answerable to the Lieutenancy and the Lieutenancy is answerable to Rome. In order to carry out this concentration I have thought of calling Pariani to the position of Inspector-General of the Party in the place of Griò,<sup>180</sup> who has done well during the preparation but who has compromised himself with too many people.

A long conference with Maria of Piedmont. She is especially disturbed by the threat of the German invasion of Belgium. I have told her that in the light of our latest information it now seems very probable. She will immediately inform King Leopold. We have agreed that when I obtain further information I will inform her through a trusted person. She wanted to know the details of what I did at Salzburg and later addressed me in a very friendly and kindly manner. She hates the Germans with all her heart and calls them liars and swine.

Mussolini wants the Albanian plan against King Zog suspended. He gives orders to this effect, and he is right, because we would not derive any advantage from it but only blame.

DECEMBER 31, 1939. Mussolini is still suffering from one of his usual recurrent waves of pro-Germanism. Now he would like to send some advice to Hitler (his previous advice made no impression), informing him that Italy is continuing to arm. But what are we preparing for? The war at the side of Germany must not be undertaken and never will be undertaken. It would be a crime and the height of folly. As for war against

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<sup>180</sup> Griò: Inspector-General of the Fascist Party.



Germany, I do not for the moment see any reason for it. In any case, if necessary I acquiesce in war against Germany but not with Germany. This is my point of view. Mussolini's point of view is exactly the opposite. He would never have war against Germany, and, when we are ready, he would fight on the side of Germany against the democracies, who, to my way of looking at it, are the only countries with which one can deal seriously and honestly.

For the moment we must not talk of war. The state of unpreparedness of the country is complete. We are worse off now than in September. General Favagrossa said yesterday that if he could have all the material already asked for, which would necessitate our factories working double shift, a sufficiently complete preparation could be reached by October of 1942. Generals Badoglio and Soddu agree that we cannot be prepared otherwise.

Thus closes a year which, for me, has been so cruel in my personal life and so generous in my political life. In my opinion the coming year holds many surprises. Maybe we shall witness a rapid conclusion to a tragic upheaval which humanity did not want and is unable to understand. In the very fact that this absurd and inexplicable war is understood by no one, we can, perhaps, find the key to its end.

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JANUARY 1, 1940. Mussolini reproaches the democracies for talking too much of peace. This depresses public opinion and creates currents hostile to the conflict. Hence, a keen pro-German feeling is reawakening in the Duce. For this reason he sent a telegram to-day to Hitler, a telegram for which some day we are going to be reproached.

JANUARY 2, 1940. I persuade the Duce to allow volunteers to leave for Finland, where fighter pilots and artillerymen are needed. To-morrow I will come to an understanding with the Finnish Minister.

Graziani, in a talk with me, reveals himself as an inter-

ventionist and a pro-German and denounces Badoglio because of the contacts he maintains with Gamelin.<sup>181</sup> I have been at odds with Badoglio many times, but this time I am in agreement with him. Graziani, on the other hand, favours war at the side of Germany and is trying to persuade the Duce to hasten it. We must neutralize his influence. I inform the Belgian Ambassador of the possibility of a German attack on the neutral countries. Two months ago I told him that I did not consider this probable. To-day I told him that new sources of information have led me to change my opinion. He was impressed.

The Duce has expressed his regret that von Ribbentrop has not sent his usual New Year's telegram of greetings. Evidently my speech has irked Ribbentrop. His anger leaves me indifferent. In fact it honours me.

JANUARY 3, 1940. The Duce has prepared a letter for Hitler. After a first reading it does not seem very compromising, but to-morrow I am going to examine it thoroughly.

Von Mackensen brings along a large portfolio containing the German Government's findings on Pfitzner's speech, which, very naturally, appear negligible. The Germans would now like us to reveal the source of our information. This is not possible. We are not informers. Attolico has written us that he was under the impression that the investigation had produced results which, at least in part, support our contention.

I have arranged a considerable transfer of diplomats. I have personally appointed Badoglio's son. He is not brilliant, but his father adores him, and at this moment I mean to keep his good-will at all costs. He is a valuable ally in the cause of non-intervention.

JANUARY 4, 1940. Nothing new.

JANUARY 5, 1940. Von Mackensen returns to see me to find out the name of the person responsible for the Pfitzner information. I give him to understand that it is an Italian already returned to Italy, who will be punished by us. He seems to accept this explanation. In reality, the document was

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<sup>181</sup> Marshal Maurice Gustave Gamelin: Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, replaced by Weygand in 1940. Arrested for having been responsible for the French defeat, 1941. On trial at Riom, 1942. Liberated by the Allies in 1945.

furnished to Muti by a Czech lawyer, for whom Muti himself accepts personal responsibility. The translation was made by an employee of the consulate, a certain Matteucci.

After having made a few changes in it, the Duce gives orders for the letter he has been pondering over to be sent to Hitler. It's a fine document, full of wisdom and restraint, but it leaves matters as they are. Mussolini's advice is accepted by Hitler only when it coincides with his own ideas.

This evening I am leaving for Venice to meet that clever and cautious Count Czaky.

Mussolini gives these indications of the state of mind of the country: "Italy has no liking for Germany, is indifferent toward France, hates Great Britain and Russia." Here is a diagnosis with which I concur only with many reservations.

JANUARY 6 and 7, 1940. At Venice with Czaky. I have had a detailed report made of the results of the conference, which, in general, I consider satisfactory. Czaky has assured me that Hungary will not take the initiative in the Balkans and thus spread the fire. As a matter of fact, I already knew about the Hungarian attitude. It recalls that of certain individuals who shout and gesticulate and threaten so that they may be prevented from coming to blows. The Hungarians (they proved it at the time of the Czechoslovak crisis) are violent in their use of words but moderate in their actions. At times, too much so.

JANUARY 8, 1930. I report to the Duce, who is annoyed that Czaky should busy himself about Croatia, toward which country Mussolini's ambitions are increasingly directed.

Conversation with François-Poncet. Nothing new from him. I inform him with some caution of the results of the Venice conference. He complains about Mussolini's kicks. "It is too bad," he affirms, "because in France they are beginning to believe that the Duce himself is the only obstacle to an understanding between the two countries."

I receive the Prince of Hesse. For the nth time he announces that the conclusion of a *modus vivendi* between the Pope and the Reich is close at hand. He alludes to the possibility of a trip to Rome by von Ribbentrop. I do my best to discourage it.

JANUARY 9, 1940. Colijn<sup>182</sup>, the ex-Premier of Holland, has come to Rome to ascertain our opinion on the situation and, if possible, to establish more direct relations. He informs me about what his country has done to impede a possible German invasion. He is certain that the Dutch will fight with the energy that comes from desperation. The Prussians' breakthrough will not be easy. I tell Colijn that, for the moment, there is nothing to do but wait and see, and, at most, to arm. Colijn said that he doesn't believe a German victory is possible. I gave him to understand that I feel the same way.

I inform Percy Loraine about the Venice results. He is satisfied with them. What we are doing for Rumania has the great advantage of placing us more and more in the anti-German camp.

JANUARY 10, 1940. Badoglio, who is now politically in a good position, no longer considers it possible that we can prepare our defences in the coming year. We lack raw materials. It will take the whole of 1941, and not even in 1942 shall we be able to pass to the offensive. In agreement with Badoglio, we will put a brake on General Graziani's ambitions. Graziani has more ambition than brains, yet he is influencing the Duce in the dangerous matter of intervention.

The Duce's letter was received by Hitler yesterday. It appears that Hitler will reply in writing. Attolico sent word to me by one of his trusted clerks that he does not believe that the Duce's suggestions will find any welcome in Germany, and that the conviction that we will soon enter the war at the side of Germany is gaining strength. We now see the results of Mussolini's conversations with Mackensen and Himmler. The fewer Germans Mussolini sees the better.

Rosso has returned from Moscow. He does not bring much news, because diplomats are forced to lead a secluded life these days. He believes that the understanding between Russia and Germany is solid, but that the Russians are not inclined to render any appreciable aid on the field of battle. He

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<sup>182</sup> Hendrikus Colijn: Dutch economist. Ex-Premier of the Netherlands. Editor of the "Standaard". Resigned because of excessive censorship, February, 1941. Arrested by Germans in July, 1941, and taken to concentration camp in Thuringia. Died there in September, 1944.

emphasizes that this is his personal opinion, because he knows nothing definite.

JANUARY 11, 1940. Attolico reports a long conference with von Ribbentrop. Nothing but comment on the Duce's letter. The Germans are wondering whether Mussolini, in laying down a proposal for the reconstruction of the Polish state as a sufficient condition for the re-establishment of peace, does not anticipate what the Allies intend to do. Nothing of the kind. It is the Duce's personal conviction. He continues to believe, and he is wrong, that the French and English do not want war. In the Goering circles they talk again of a German offensive within a short time, and anticipate victory. The Duce's letter has not, on the whole, been well received.

Mussolini talked to me to-day of "intervention at the side of Germany during the second half of 1941". He, too, is becoming convinced that the unpreparedness of the armed forces makes any kind of military activity by us before that time impossible. I told von Mackensen that von Ribbentrop, in speaking with Attolico, denied that he had stated that France and Great Britain would not enter the war. Von Mackensen, after I had reminded him of the Salzburg bet, beat his forehead and said: "I can't say anything, because von Ribbentrop is my Minister, but I should be sorry if I were cursed with such a short memory."

JANUARY 12, 1940. Nothing new.

JANUARY 13, 1940. The Duce talks to me about Muti. He says that in the management of the Fascist party the command has gone soft and that a too violent contrast exists as compared with the rigid formalism of Starace, "whom he adored". I had to agree. Muti has got into bad company, is presumptuous, and I don't think he will last long.

Our negotiations with the British to solve the problem of the blockade have run aground, in spite of a very courteous personal letter from Halifax, which reached me to-day.

We again discuss the crown of Hungary with Villani: union under one head, or else coronation of the Duke of Aosta. Doesn't matter which, so long as we proceed more rapidly, because the question of Croatia is quickly coming to a head.

JANUARY 14, 1940. The Germans make a violent protest

against the sale of Italian aeroplane engines to France. The Duce wants to forbid the exportation of war materials to the Allies. But after a long discussion, in the presence of Riccardi, he is convinced that we will quite soon be left without foreign exchange, and hence without raw materials that are indispensable to military preparedness and that can be obtained only with foreign money owing to the devaluation of the Italian lira. Therefore, I can speak clearly to the Germans. I draw up a note, giving our point of view. I do not delude myself. The Germans will be furious, but this will make it possible for us to assure ourselves a greater freedom in international commerce, which at this moment suits us well.

I tell Percy Loraine that it is not possible for us to accede to the British proposals in the matter of the blockade. The Italians will not allow their most elementary necessities to be rationed. British persistence would be equivalent to transferring the problem of blockade to the political sphere, and this is very dangerous. Sir Percy Loraine, who is every day becoming more understanding, has grasped the point.

JANUARY 15, 1940. Mussolini approves the memorandum which, during the evening, I deliver to von Mackensen, who receives it with few words and with great disappointment, and I do nothing to modify his impression.

The Duce is depressed because of the state of our armed forces, which he has at last come to recognize. The number of divisions that are ready are ten; by the end of January there will be eleven. The others lack more or less everything. Some lack 92 per cent of their equipment. Under these conditions it is folly to speak of war. Mussolini, according to what he says, is discouraged to the point of feeling the symptoms of a new stomach ulcer.

I set up a special office for Finland at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The office is to co-ordinate all our political, military, and economic efforts in favour of this Baltic nation. I entrust it to Captain Bechi.

Conference with Sir Percy. We try to settle our navicert difficulties. He informs me that before long the embargo will also strike at German coal, which arrives by sea. Although the Duce does not seem to attach much weight to such a decision.

I am really anxious because of the consequences it will have on the entire economic life of our country.

JANUARY 16, 1940. The carabinieri give the Duce an alarming report on Albania. He takes it very seriously. The carabinieri command is a reliable source of information, but they talk too much, and at times they just pass on observations made by non-commissioned officers. Jacomoni vehemently denies all that the carabinieri report, and prepares, together with Benini, a counter-report. In Albania we are working methodically, and without bluffing, which, in the opinion of some, is perhaps a mistake. But I do not intend to change.

Muti and I prepare the agenda for the meeting of the federal secretaries of the Fascist party. We must give the impression that the machinery of the Fascist party is, as ever, in good working order. The Duce wants to add certain phrases with an anti-Allied flavour, but this is a mistake, because it will harden Franco-British feeling against us and afford us no practical advantage.

A letter from the Princess of Piedmont thanking me in the name of her brother for what I have done for him. I believe that the warning was in time. And to-day Attolico telegraphs that the attack on Belgium is not only probable, but may even be imminent. Attolico is very conscientious in his gathering of news.

JANUARY 17, 1940. Mussolini, in his present see-sawing state of mind, is to-day somewhat hostile to the Germans. He says: "They should allow themselves to be guided by me if they do not want to make unpardonable blunders. In politics it is undeniable that I am more intelligent than Hitler." I must say that the Chancellor of the Reich has not given any proof that he shares this opinion.

Christic, on his return from Belgrade, renews his assurances of friendship for Italy, and insists on emphasizing that the understanding reached between Serbs and Croats is this time deep and active. However, the news that comes to us from another source is exactly to the contrary.

I received De Man, the Belgian Minister, on his way to Rome, as well as the Polish Ambassador, who tells me of the

daily martyrdom that his country is undergoing under the terrible yoke of German bestiality.

Accompanied by Jacomoni, I discussed the Albanian situation with the Duce. Let the carabinieri think and write as they please. However, one thing is certain: up to now Albania has not caused us the least trouble.

JANUARY 18, 1940. I went with Jacomoni to see the Duce. I think the Duce, too, realizes that the alarm created by General Agostinucci,<sup>183</sup> who is called the "stuffed lion" by the Albanians, is, in large measure at least, unjustified. The meeting was useful, at any rate, in that agreement was reached on certain plans for public works, especially in Tirana.

I confer with Ricci on the coal problem. The Duce told him: "I have the pleasure, and let me emphasize *the pleasure*, to inform you that English coal can no longer arrive in Italy." This he considers to be a good lash of the whip for the Italians, so that they will learn to depend only on their own resources. He counts on substituting our own lignite for the coal which is now imported from Great Britain. But will our own lignite be sufficient? And is the machinery to extract it available? Ricci does not conceal his scepticism.

Percy Loraine talks to me about the blockade and about commercial problems; then he becomes thoughtful and intent. He seems to want to say something but cannot decide. I encourage him to speak. He reveals to me his concern over the attitude of the Duce, whom he feels and knows to be fundamentally hostile. "The Duce must know," he concludes, "that the Britain of to-day is no longer the Britain of a year ago. She is now strong and prepared for anything." It is hard for me to argue with him, because I am of the same opinion and he knows it.

JANUARY 19, 1940. To-day François-Poncet could not conceal his concern over the attitude the Duce is assuming. The declarations made by the secretary of the Party, of which, however, the origin is obvious, had an unfavourable echo in France and Britain, as they sound like threats. Nevertheless, we must convince ourselves that the Allies will win the war

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<sup>183</sup> General Christino Agostinucci. Member of the Italian General Staff.



and we must not present ourselves at the peace table in the guise of accomplices, albeit non-combatant accomplices, of Germany. I tried to convince François-Poncet that he was wrong, but the facts, alas, count more than words, including my own words. Even Balbo, who came to see me and who thinks in every respect as I do, was very hostile to the declarations made by Muti on foreign policy, as well as on domestic policy.

JANUARY 20, 1940. Meeting of the Council of Ministers characterized by a phantasmagoric display of billions which we have not got—provisional budgets that would take anybody's breath away—anybody but the Duce, who maintains an imperturbable calm. He said that States are never shaken by financial questions; they fall either because of internal political instability or by military defeats, never because of economic causes. Revel<sup>184</sup> weakly objected, saying that the French Revolution failed precisely because of the assignat, but the Duce did not encourage the discussion and cut him short, adding something about a possible advantage of inflation on a Gargantuan scale, but, fortunately, he spoke of it only academically.

JANUARY 21, 1940. Countess Potoka,<sup>185</sup> with whom I hunted wild boar last year at Bialowieza and whom I was instrumental in freeing from a Russian prison some weeks ago, came to see me. She described with dignity her life in Russia during her imprisonment, her return trip, her encounter with the German Gestapo. She wished neither to alarm me nor to seek my pity. She is too aristocratic for that. She despises the Russians. She hates the Germans. She said that Beck is not disliked in Poland, where his policies are understood and supported, but that Marshal Smigly-Rydz can never again return to Poland.

Bombelles describes the visit of the Regent Paul to Zagreb as "a funeral during which no one took off his hat". He says that the situation goes from bad to worse, that the Serbian

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<sup>184</sup> Count Paolo Thaon de Revel: Italian Minister of Finance, 1935-43. A senator, called the "Red Count".

<sup>185</sup> Countess Potoka: A member of the Radziwill family, wife of Count Joseph Potoka, a Polish diplomat.

is hated more and more and is less efficient, and that shortly everything will be ready for the rebellion. He proposes my meeting Pavelic, which I neither accept nor decline. Our eventual line of action should be the following: insurrection, occupation of Zagreb, arrival of Pavelic, appeal to Italy for her intervention, formation of a kingdom of Croatia, and offer of the crown to the King of Italy. Bombelles is in agreement and says that our military effort will be insignificant because the popular insurrection will be complete and the Serbs will be struck everywhere and implacably disposed of by the Croats.

JANUARY 22, 1940. Mussolini agrees on the need for my having a talk with Pavelic. This will take place to-morrow at home. In principle the Croat question seems to be on its way toward a solution. It is, however, necessary to prepare the ground with London and Paris. This is a fundamental condition. Otherwise it is better to do nothing about it. Mussolini, however, turns a deaf ear to all this. Yesterday, when I asked him for assurances regarding the future which I wanted to communicate to Loraine and Poncet, he said: "One thing is certain: we shall never join with them." I took great care not to say this to the two Ambassadors as Mussolini would have wished.

I appealed to the Rumanian Minister for the release of certain Hungarians who have been accused of plotting against the safety of the State. It will be a useful gesture, since a trial would make the tension between those two countries more acute.

JANUARY 23, 1940. Council of Ministers. Military budget. The Duce takes advantage of this occasion to speak of the international situation. All of his shafts are aimed against France and England, who "can now no longer win the war". He repeats that we cannot indefinitely remain neutral. To preserve neutrality until the end of the war would make us play second fiddle among the European Powers. He foresees that our military resources will enable us to make a move during the second half of 1940, or perhaps during the early part of 1941. Every allusion to action is directed toward the Allies. He speaks of terror bombings over France, of the control of the Mediterranean. His declaration greatly impressed the Ministers; some of them approved heartily, especially Ricci and Revel.

Riccardi, on the other hand, speaking later in the ante-chamber, said that it is absurd to plan to arm seventy divisions when the raw materials at our disposal are hardly enough to arm ten of them.

I received Pavelic. Anfuso has made a stenographic record of the conference. Pavelic is an aggressive, calm man, who knows where he wants to go, and does not fear to take responsibility when necessary to attain his ends. We have fixed upon the principal points of preparation and action.

I assure Sir Percy Loraine that I am doing "something and even more than something" in favour of Finland. He was satisfied.

JANUARY 24, 1940. Nothing new.

JANUARY 25, 1940. Nothing new.

JANUARY 26, 1940. Nothing new.

JANUARY 27, 1940. The Finnish Minister asks for additional supplies of arms, especially heavy artillery; and he asks for them in a tone of desperation. If things go on in Finland as they are now, the overwhelming superiority of Russian resources will break down Finnish morale and resistance will come to an end. Perhaps the Minister has painted too dark a picture, but it is certain that to hope for an unlimited resistance is a vain illusion.

Gamelin has said to General Visconti Prasca, who in turn has told me, that he would be ready to give a billion to the Germans, provided they would do him the favour of taking the initiative in the attack. Visconti Prasca thinks the French army the best in the world. He is convinced that from this day Germany has lost the war.

JANUARY 28, 1940. The Duce has returned from Terminillo. He is not exactly nervous, but he appeared more than usually irritable. He takes it out, as usual, on France and England, because, owing to their policies, "they have lost the victory". And he takes it out on Germany for having hastened the war which, within three years, "would have been won because of the disunity among the democracies".

Even regarding the internal situation he is dissatisfied, because of Muti. The latter has taken some disciplinary measures that have had wide publicity and have met with the

approval of anti-Fascist circles, which makes Mussolini indignant. "We must act like the Church," he said, "which never strikes its members publicly. Once I denounced the Bishop of Jesi to Tacchi Venturi for moral turpitude. Notwithstanding overwhelming proof, no satisfaction was given me then and there, but some years afterwards I learned that the guilty man had died in obscurity at Frascati."

I see Poncet. He is disturbed about the Italian attitude. He thinks that he can recognize the signs of warmongering and pro-German activities. He is convinced that Mussolini is blinded by his hatred for democracy, and that one day he will end by bringing about an unavoidable crisis.

JANUARY 29, 1940. After a long interval I saw the King again. As usual he was very courteous to me, praising my work. He is anti-German, for such are his convictions and his nature, but no longer sure about a German defeat. He is doubtful about the capacity for internal resistance of the British Empire. He is disturbed about Italy. "With the present policy we risk becoming '*a Dio spiacente ed a' nemici suoi*.'" He was sufficiently informed on Mussolini's plans for Croatia, but did not conceal his mistrust regarding the success of the undertaking if it is not preceded by a timely understanding with France and Britain.

The Duce is irritated by the internal situation. The people grumble. Food restrictions are a matter to be taken into account. War again casts its shadow on the country. He was annoyed with the Count of Torino,<sup>186</sup> who was hoarding soap, he says, "to help wash his 35,000 whores, though what he does with them, considering the state of his health, I cannot imagine". He ranted about the possibility of an uprising: "When the instincts in a people are static and unadventurous, only the use of force can save them. Those whom we strike will be grateful because the blow will save them from falling into the abyss toward which their own fear was pushing them. Have you ever seen a lamb become a wolf? The Italian race is a race of sheep. Eighteen years are not enough to change them. It takes a hundred and eighty, and maybe a hundred and eighty centuries."

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<sup>186</sup> Count of Torino: Cousin of King Victor Emanuel III.

JANUARY 30, 1940. Piero Parini points out that the professors and students of Corcia [Albania] who created disorders lately have been identified, and he believes that some harsh punishment is necessary. The Duce approves. I telegraph, ordering that they be arrested and deported to some island in the Tyrrhenian Sea. The Albanian intellectuals, as is logical, are those who most oppose the new situation, and it is necessary to absorb them wherever possible, or to deal severely with those who are unwilling to be convinced. It is not a very serious problem: a matter involving two or three hundred persons. The Albanian people do not give trouble. They work, earn, and enjoy a comfortable life, which they have not had until now, and most of them are satisfied.

JANUARY 31, 1940. The British Ambassador informs me that while his Government is increasing the shipment of supplies to Finland, it has decided not to send military units. He is pleased when I tell him that we, too, are shipping supplies and a nucleus of specialists. At the end of the conversation he hints at the apprehension aroused by the personal attitude of the Duce. England feels in the Duce's hostility something that will prevent a deep and sincere rapprochement. I try to deny this, but he does not listen to me, nor can I proceed along this line with an intelligent and frank man like Percy Loraine, nor go very much beyond what is generally referred to as a conventional diplomatic white lie.

Hitler has made a speech for which I see no reason, except that of celebrating the date of his assumption of power.

FEBRUARY 1, 1940. Anniversary of the founding of the militia. Mussolini made a speech which I did not hear, but which is reported to me to be alarmingly extreme. Brief, uncompromising, ending with the affirmation that the Italians are yearning to fight "that fight which is bound to come". Unfortunately, nothing can be done about it. His mind is set and decided on war. The only good thing in it is that he has given orders to Pavolini not to reproduce the speech in the press. At least there will not be a new crisis with France and England. That's something, when one lives from day to day.

Mussolini leaves for Romagna.

FEBRUARY 2, 1940. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 3, 1940. The British Ambassador delivers a memorandum relative to our commercial negotiations. The terms are not bad, but one of the clauses must be considered *sine qua non*, and that is the sale to Great Britain of arms and ammunition. I am certain that the Duce will not like it, but Riccardi says that we must make a virtue of necessity and reach an agreement with the English, otherwise the economic situation will become too burdensome.

FEBRUARY 4, 1940. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 5, 1940. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 6, 1940. Conference with General Carboni, just returned from Germany. He makes a frank and pessimistic report on the state of the country. Lack of food and, above all, lack of enthusiasm. A great land offensive is being prepared, but it will not be possible to start it before the end of April, after the thaws.

I see the Prince of Hesse. He wants to confer with the Duce on behalf of Hitler, but has nothing special to say. He informs me that Goering is more than ever incensed against Italy, and apparently against me personally. That won't keep me awake. The real reason must be sought in the collar of the Order of the Annunziata given to von Ribbentrop when he expected it for himself. He blames me for it. He will calm down when he gets his.

Mussolini telephones from Forlì. He continues to object to the sale of arms to the British. He thinks that the British position is every day becoming more and more difficult. Why?

FEBRUARY 7, 1940. Return of the Duce, with whom I have a long conversation. Meanwhile, he refuses to sell arms to Great Britain. He says that he does not want to reduce the armaments that are at our disposal, and that he intends to fulfil the obligations recently confirmed with Germany. "Governments, like individuals, must follow a line of morality and honour." He is not concerned about the British reactions, which I prophesy will inevitably be harsh. Neither does the lack of coal weigh on his mind. He repeats that it is good for the Italian people to be put to tests that cause them to shake off their century-old mental laziness. He is bitter toward the people. "We must keep them disciplined and in uniform from

morning till night. Beat them and beat them and beat them." He does not discriminate between the classes, and calls "the people" all those who wish to vegetate.

I inform Riccardi of the Duce's decision in the matter of commercial exchanges with Great Britain. He is very gloomy. He had counted upon the £20,000,000 that were a part of the agreement, and he is afraid that we shall no longer receive the raw materials, most of which were to come from the British market. Von Mackensen comes to plead for the usual illicit favours that Germany demands as a part of our collaboration. As usual, I am inclined to answer these secondary demands affirmatively, in order to be able to answer the larger demand negatively whenever it comes, as, unfortunately, come it will.

FEBRUARY 8, 1940. I inform Percy Loraine that the Duce has decided to turn down every request for war material. The communication had a strong effect. Loraine replied that this destroyed the basis of all negotiations and that shortly the transport of coal from Germany would be stopped. He emphasized also the political significance of our refusal. Italo-British relations are moving into a period of sharper tension. When I stated that the Duce is disposed to re-examine his decision in six months, he answered that by that time Europe will be reshaped for ten generations to come.

I take Prince Hesse to the Duce. Hitler proposes a meeting of the two chiefs at the frontier. Mussolini immediately declared himself favourable. I fear this meeting. When the Duce is with the Germans he becomes excited. To-day, with Hesse, he used unambiguously bellicose language. He said that he means to take his place at the side of Germany as soon as his war preparations permit us to be a help rather than a hindrance to the Germans. Even with Hesse he maintained an attitude of complete indifference with regard to the coal crisis, about which everyone is worried. Bocchini, the Minister of Police, confirms reports that the state of mind of the country is becoming more and more unsettled, and he fears regrettable incidents and disorders in the near future.

FEBRUARY 9, 1940. Clodius, who has been in Rome for some days on commercial business, received with joy the news of the Duce's refusal to Britain. He declared that if

Italian arms were sold to the Allies a violent reaction would develop, particularly in German military quarters. Clodius was unhappy over the progress of his negotiations. He asks for many things, perhaps for too many things, and receives many refusals from our officials. I limited myself to giving him assurances and fair words. They cost so little.

The Duce is very proud of his "no" to the British. He repeats that States, like individuals, must have a moral standard on which no compromise can be made; the course of honour cannot be disregarded. Selling arms to the British would have dishonoured us. Naturally, I replied, but it remains to be seen for how long a time, in view of the practical difficulties, we can continue to be unyielding. The sources of raw materials are in the hands of others. How will these others react now?

The Duce has confirmed his statement that he is favourable to the meeting with Hitler. He also looks with favour on a visit by Ribbentrop to Rome, especially because this would permit him to visit the Pope.

FEBRUARY 10, 1940. Nothing new. I go to Leghorn for the celebration of the anniversary of Buccari.<sup>187</sup>

FEBRUARY 11, 1930. The ceremony at my father's tomb arouses in me pride and sadness. While formerly it used to be a joy for me to go to the city of my childhood, now it reopens old wounds. My father's death has changed my life, or, rather, my conception of life. My youth, too, was buried in his grave.

Benini reports that Riccardi made a very courageous speech before the Supreme Defence Council on our present monetary situation, our stocks of raw materials, and on the real condition of our armed forces. In the speech he reached totally pessimistic conclusions and spoke in a tone never heard before. Badoglio objected not so much to the substance, with which he fully agreed, as to the form.

FEBRUARY 12, 1940. I found the Duce irritated by Riccardi's speech. According to him, what Riccardi said pleased the critics of Fascist policy so much that as soon as the Duce had left the room Balbo went to shake hands with Riccardi, until then his implacable enemy. The Duce repeats

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<sup>187</sup> Buccari raid, by the Italian Navy against the Austrian Navy in the 1914-18 War led by Ciano's father.



that he does not believe in the cry-baby of the Foreign Trade and Exchange Department. Even Guarneri has for the last six years been announcing that we are on the brink of bankruptcy, but we have carried on quite well, the Duce thinks. But the Duce does not add that during that time we have consumed all that we possessed in gold and foreign securities. Now our reserves have been reduced to a negligible sum, and when this is gone we shall have only our eyes to weep with. Riccardi erred in his approach, but he acted courageously in sounding the alarm.

FEBRUARY 13, 1940. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 14, 1940. I communicate to Sir Percy Loraine the Duce's final decision to refuse the British all military supplies, including the training planes already contracted for. Sir Percy does not conceal his disappointment and says that the relations between our two countries are indeed moving toward a period of increasing difficulties.

General Graziani, replying to Riccardi's speech at a meeting of the Supreme Defence Council, claims that the Army should be thanked for not having asked excessive financial sacrifices of the country. The Duce takes on himself all responsibility and defends the military programme. He says that ever since 1935 the Italian economists have been threatening bankruptcy, and that, in spite of this, we have continued to carry on. In reply, Riccardi made up pretty well for his previous error, expressed regrets for the form of his speech, but in substance repeated what he had said on Saturday. The laws of economics cannot be changed.

Balbo accompanies me to the Palazzo Chigi. He can hardly control himself. He fully approves of my action. "Just whistle," he says, "and I'll come to your aid."

FEBRUARY 15, 1940. Bocchini's report on the internal situation was very pessimistic. The poverty of the nation is growing and all kinds of difficulties increase. The prestige of the regime is not what it used to be. But is Bocchini telling these things to Mussolini? He swears to me that he is.

FEBRUARY 16, 1940. François-Poncet, whom I had not seen for a long time, complains about our press attacks, and especially of those appearing in the *Popolo d'Italia*. The French

newspapers, for the time being, have ignored these attacks, but relations between the two countries are suffering none the less, and the atmosphere of better understanding which we had established in months past is again disturbed. I used some kind words, but nothing more, since the press campaign is personally desired and directed by the Duce, and my influence is very limited.

Donegani<sup>188</sup> is overwrought about the coal question. If our supplies diminish or cease entirely in the coming weeks, industry will suffer a sudden stoppage, with dire consequences in the field of production and labour.

I receive Sidorovici,<sup>189</sup> head of the Rumanian Youth Movement. He is a brainless ass—a preposterous, colourless creature.

FEBRUARY 17, 1940. News from Finland confirms the fact that the position of the defenders is becoming more serious. The Russians are exerting more and more pressure with immense masses of men and arms. Resistance under such conditions cannot last very long. For obvious reasons we can do no more than has already been done. Nor is it advisable for us to commit ourselves too much in a military undertaking which is beyond our control.

Sir Percy comes to show me certain papers of minor importance which tend to prove collusion between Nazism and Communism. I needed no such proof. I conferred with the Duce on the necessity for stopping our petty newspaper campaign against France. He promised me that he would stop it—but for how long?

FEBRUARY 18, 1940. Last night at the Colonnas' Percy Loraine told me that March 1st had been chosen as the date when England would stop all shipments of coal coming to Italy from Germany by sea. I talked about this to the Duce, who flaunts his indifference on the subject. He talks a great deal about national fuels and is counting on an increase of production in our lignite mines. He deceives himself and is deceived by others. Technical experts (and I mean those who are really capable and honest) agree that the lack of coal will

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<sup>188</sup> Donegani: Italian industrialist. Head of Italian Chemical Trust. Arrested by the Germans in 1943.

<sup>189</sup> General Teofile Sidorovici.

paralyse our national life to a large degree. The last few months should have taught Mussolini a great deal about the dangers of auto-suggestion.

Sebastiani informs me that Mussolini intends to dismiss Revel because of the scandalous failure of his sales tax. This was an idiotic arrangement, because there is nothing more hateful than a tax which irritates millions of taxpayers at every turn.

I talked to Casertano<sup>190</sup> about Muti. He insists that Muti is acting in good faith, but that power has gone to his head, and that he is under the influence of a group of friends, persons of minor importance in the Army and elsewhere, who push him into heaping error on error in their own personal interests. I don't think that Muti will last long as secretary of the Fascist Party.

FEBRUARY 19, 1940. Nothing new in politics. The British attack on the German steamer *Altmark*, which was sailing in Norwegian territorial waters with British prisoners, has made a deep impression. I speak of it with Percy Loraine, and to his surprise I declare that the British action is justified and reminiscent of the boldest traditions of the Navy at the time of Francis Drake.

I advise the Hungarian Villani to be calm, very calm. If a conflict should break out within a short time, provoked by Hungary, we would not be in a position to give any help. Besides, even the Magyars do not approve the verbal but dangerous violence of Count Czaky. At the Golf Club Countess Betlem suggested that I should pull the coat-tails of her much too intemperate Minister for Foreign Affairs [Czaky].

FEBRUARY 20, 1940. Goering, in talking with Teucci,<sup>191</sup> spoke clearly about the Italian position, pronouncing judgments which reveal that he is disappointed and very angry. We must keep this in mind. He is the most human of the German chiefs, but he is emotional and violent and might become dangerous. In the meantime, Clodius and Mackensen have come to protest about the difficulties they are encountering in the commercial negotiations. What do they want from us? I told them openly,

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<sup>190</sup> Antonio Casertano: Lawyer from Naples. A Secretary of the Fascist Party.

<sup>191</sup> Colonel Teucci: Italian Military Attaché in Berlin.

as long as we maintain a hostile policy toward France and Great Britain we shall have increasing difficulties in providing ourselves with raw materials. They cannot demand, as they do, that we also renounce our Balkan markets.

Percy Loraine informs me in writing that to-day his Government will declare in the House of Commons that German coal en route to Italy is merchandise subject to confiscation. The crisis is approaching, and all the Stefani communications which to-day filled the newspapers with articles on our production and use of lignite will not suffice to divert it.

Ansaldo reports on a conversation with the Duce. Nothing essentially new. The Duce reiterates his firm hostility towards the democracies and his idea of waging war on the side of Germany, an idea in which I believe less and less.

FEBRUARY 21, 1940. The Duce intends to satisfy the Germans, and at the Palazzo Venezia there is a meeting with Riccardi and Giannini<sup>192</sup>. Both of them are insistent on the need to refuse to relinquish goods which we ourselves lack, such as hemp, copper, and other raw materials. But the Duce decides to give away 3,500 tons of copper, from the amount which he is preparing to extort from the Italians. He thinks that the total requisition will amount to 20,000 tons, but perhaps this estimate is too high. Nevertheless, the requisition will not be well received, and worse still if it becomes known that a part of the copper will have to be ceded to the hated Germans. I tried to insist that the Duce should not requisition sacred objects in the churches. He refused. "The churches do not need copper but faith, and there is very little faith left now. Catholicism is wrong in demanding too much credulity from modern man."

FEBRUARY 22, 1940. Our commercial agreement with the Germans was reached easily after the intervention of the Duce.

I see the Prince of Piedmont. I apprise him of the situation, with which in fact he is very familiar and assesses wisely. But it was clear that he liked to hear from me what he himself did not dare to say. He is very anti-German and convinced

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<sup>192</sup> Alberto Giannini: Italian Minister of Foreign Commerce.

that Italy must remain neutral. He is sceptical, very sceptical, about the potentialities of the Army in its present condition—a condition which he considers to be altogether pitiful.

FEBRUARY 23, 1940. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 24, 1940. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 25, 1940. Hitler has spoken. Contrary to the English comments, which pass his speech off as quite ordinary, the Duce considers that this time the Führer has sought to make known his peace conditions: recognition of the principle of lebensraum for Germany and restoration of the colonies. These conditions seem to me such that it would be unworthy of London to discuss them, but the Duce considers them acceptable. The Duce has once more confirmed his certainty that the Allies will lose the war, and his whole policy is based on this conviction. In fact, he has again spoken of claims against France, and has outlined his thesis on the necessity of free access to the high seas, without which Italy will never be an empire.

FEBRUARY 26, 1940. I received Roosevelt's representative, Sumner Welles.<sup>193</sup> He is an American distinguished in appearance and in manner, who carries easily the weight of a mission which has given him much American and world publicity. The conference was very cordial. I did not hesitate to inform him on events about which he had no knowledge, and to explain to him my own plans. I gave a normal, simple tone to the conversation and this impressed him because he was not expecting it. He is anti-German, but makes an effort to be correctly impartial. He was glad, however, when I let him know my feelings and sympathies. Unfortunately, the conference with the Duce (detailed elsewhere) took place in a rather icy atmosphere. Mussolini stresses the note of aloofness that he is now showing openly in his relations with the Anglo-Saxons. Sumner Welles left the Mappamondo room more depressed than when he entered it. The Duce later commented sarcastically on the interview: "Between us and the Americans any kind of understanding is impossible because they judge problems on the surface while we go deeply into them." The

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<sup>193</sup> Sumner Welles: United States Under-Secretary of State, 1937-43.

Duce was not impressed by Welles's personality, but I do not agree with him. I have had too much to do with high German officials, that pack of presumptuous vulgarians, not to appreciate the fact that Sumner Welles is a gentleman.

FEBRUARY 27, 1940. I go to Naples to act as Crown Notary on the occasion of the birth of Princess Maria Gabriella, daughter of Prince Humbert and Princess Maria José. I also visit the work in progress for the Triennial Overseas Exhibition and of the Ciano Shipbuilding Institute, an institution worthy of the name it bears. During my absence the Duce has an editorial published in italics in the *Giornale d'Italia* answering the Daily Herald, in which he says that in addition to being willing to join the Germans we are also ready to join the Russians if there is any intention on the Allied side of threatening our existence as a totalitarian regime. This caused considerable comment, none of it favourable.

FEBRUARY 28, 1940. The Duce said yesterday to Anfuso: "There are still some criminals and imbeciles in Italy who believe that Germany will be beaten. I tell you Germany will win." I accept "imbecile" if it is for me, but I think "criminal" is unjust. In any case, it is this deep, honest conviction of his that inspires his actions. The Duce gave orders that the report of the conversation with Sumner Welles be given to Mackensen, and Mackensen was very pleased. I can understand it. Mussolini defended the German thesis with absolute determination.

News comes from Paris that political censorship has been lifted. Here's an event that cannot fail to complicate matters.

FEBRUARY 29, 1940. Pavolini received orders to launch a polemic against some French newspapers because of an article by Henri de Kerillis on Italian neutrality. A very touchy subject. All we have to do is to start and the rest will follow. I am worried.

This morning the Duce let off steam against the people of Genoa, who, like the Milanese, "show themselves to be incurably pro-English and at the same time discreetly treacherous". The reason is that in Genoa they are complaining more than elsewhere, despite the fact that Albini<sup>194</sup> denies it.

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<sup>194</sup> Umberto Albini: Prefect of Genoa, later Prefect of Naples.

Again Bocchini is concerned more and more about the internal situation. Economic difficulties, political uncertainty, scarcity of food: these are the fundamental reasons for discomfort.

From various sources it is confirmed that Germany is getting ready for an offensive on the Western Front. It cannot be immediate, however; in Goering's circle they mention the end of March, a month dear to Hitler's superstition.

MARCH 1, 1940. The English press announces that as from to-day German coal will be treated as an article of contraband, and therefore seized. We shall have moments of serious difficulty before we can arrange to get coal from British sources, apart altogether from the difficulties of paying. The Duce has set aside for this purpose a billion in gold at the Bank of Italy. On the *Rex*, which is soon to leave, we shall send ingots valued at 2,000,000 dollars. After this is withdrawn, our gold reserve will be quite inadequate to cover the deficit in the balance of payments estimated at 4,000,000,000,000 lire for the current year. Despite these difficulties the Duce repeats that never has a government fallen because of financial and economic difficulties. To-day he praised the broad vision manifest in Hitler's policies, who has in mind "a real plan to regulate European life", based upon an exchange of populations so as to make political frontiers coincide with ethnical frontiers.

Revel is not at all pessimistic about the financial situation, and I am surprised. To-day at the Golf Club he explained to me a fantastic theory of his according to which gold will no longer be worth anything, and we shall become rich through the sale of works of art. Revel is a fool, who has begun to play the part of an extreme interventionist in order to please his master. Nevertheless, this is dangerous, because the Minister of Finance, if honest and capable, ought to act as a sort of brake.

MARCH 2, 1940. The coal blockade is causing a great deal of comment in the international press, and also a certain amount of excitement in Italy. The Duce thinks it necessary to address a note of protest in strong terms to the British Government. He himself dictates the concluding phrases of the note, which is harsh and threatening.

I receive Sir Noel Charles, who is replacing the Ambassador, who is ill. He seeks to clarify the measures taken by his govern-

ment concerning the blockade, but the explanation is of slight significance. I take advantage of the occasion to tell him—as a good friend of the British—that the measures taken on the coal question are the sort that will serve to push Italy into the arms of Germany. It would be absurd not to admit that British stock is down in our estimation.

Charles informs me, too, of the impending dispatch of new forces to the Near East, which should not be interpreted as having any connection with the Balkan situation.

MARCH 3, 1940. The Duce approves the note I have prepared on the basis of his conclusions, a note, I believe, which is firm and to the point, and yet not such as to burn our bridges. Von Mackensen comes to see me. I give him a copy of the note. His Government instructs him to say that the German press is at our disposal for an attack on Great Britain on the coal question. The Berlin game is clear. The Germans are trying at any cost to embitter relations between us and London. I have not the least intention of encouraging this. I thank von Mackensen, and tell him that it is not necessary to take any further steps. We are able to take care of the matter with the means at our disposal.

Guariglia sends an interesting and adroit report on Italo-French relations. He goes so far as to propose negotiations and the conclusion of an agreement. Although the report contains phrases and arguments which will certainly be unwelcome to the Duce, I decide to submit it to him anyway, because it may have a wholesome influence on his line of thought.

I speak to the Duce about the eventual export of works of art. He is favourable, but I am not. He does not like works of art, and above all detests that period of history during which the greatest masterpieces were produced. I recall—he recalls it too—that he felt a sense of annoyance and physical fatigue unusual in him on the day he was obliged to accompany Hitler on a detailed visit of inspection to the Pitti Palace<sup>195</sup> and to the Uffizi.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Pitti Palace: Former residence of the Grand Dukes in Florence, now an art gallery and museum.

<sup>196</sup> Uffizi: Art gallery founded by the Medici family. Both the Pitti and the Uffizi were only slightly damaged when the Germans retreated from Florence. Most of their contents, some of the most valuable pictures in the world, had been removed to safety at the beginning of the war.



MARCH 4, 1940. I go with General Marras to the Duce; the former is very pessimistic about the German attitude toward us. He is convinced that the Germans, notwithstanding a certain respect for us, maintain their hatred and scorn unchanged, now aggravated by what they call a second treachery. No war move would be so popular in Germany, both for the older and younger generations, as an armed invasion pushed in the direction of our blue skies and warm seas. This and other things Marras frankly told the Duce, who is shocked by the report. The Duce repeated his theory of a parallel war, and again insisted that Italy will never enter the war at the side of the Western Powers. Of this he is certain.

Bodini<sup>197</sup> likewise presents a report on his visit to Germany, but it is very superficial. Two points emerge from it: the certainty of an approaching offensive, and the German conviction that they won the war last September. What a bitter delusion it will be if they find themselves engaged in trench warfare during the coming winter.

MARCH 5, 1940. The American Consul at Naples, in order to find out the state of mind of the Italian people, questioned a beggar, who answered that he does not fear war, but rather revolution. The report, which has fallen into the hands of the Duce, has put him in a good humour. He observes: "Even the beggars are so well content with their condition under the Fascist regime as to fear a revolution." This was his final comment, but as Minister for Foreign Affairs I shudder at the sources of information used by consuls, naturally including our own consuls.

Another conversation with the King. I find him disappointed at the British attitude, which, however, has not changed his stubbornly anti-German view. "I know that I am in the German black book," he said. "Yes, Your Majesty. At the top. And if you will allow me to be bold enough to say it, I appear in it immediately after you." "I think so too. This honours both of us so far as Italy is concerned." Such was the tone of our conversation. I did not hesitate to tell him that I would consider a German victory the greatest disaster for our

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<sup>197</sup> Bodini: Staff Officer of the Italian Army Intelligence Service.

country. He asked what we might be able to obtain from the Allies. "The preservation of the liberty of Italy, which German hegemony would compromise for centuries to come," I said. He agreed.

I try in vain to assuage the worries of François-Poncet, who is very much disturbed over the resumption of the pro-German tendencies on the part of the press, the Party, and above all the Duce.

MARCH 6, 1940. The Duce is more than ever irritated about the coal question. The first ships were held up yesterday, precisely as stated in Percy Loraine's report, although some information in the press and the optimism of the Minister of Communications had caused us to hope for a postponement. Mussolini is angered at this display of force more than by the practical consequences that might result from it. "Within a short time the guns will fire by themselves. It is not possible that of all people I should become the laughing-stock of Europe. I have to stand for one humiliation after another. As soon as I am ready I shall make the British repent. My intervention in the war will bring about their defeat." The Duce, alas, is still under illusions as to our chances of quick rearmament. The situation is still very difficult and lack of coal will only make it worse. Perhaps we shall enter the war, but we shall be unprepared and unarmed.

For the first time I have found a person who wants to declare war with the Germans against France and Great Britain. This person is no less than the intrepid Cesare Maria de Vecchi di Val Cismon! The Americans say that a fool is born every minute; one has only to look for him. This time I have found one. Cesare Maria is, above all, pompous and full of vain illusions. He dreams of obtaining a marshal's baton and decorations and hopes to gain them through the blood of others.

MARCH 7, 1940. The situation created by the confiscation of our coal is not at all changed, although Bastianini indicates from London a possible easing of the British attitude. Mussolini is brooding over his exasperation. To-day he uttered between his teeth new and vague threats against the British. He said: "England will be beaten. Inexorably beaten. This is the pure truth, and you should get it into your head." During our seven

years of daily contacts this is the *first* time that he has gone for me personally. If I considered my job more important than my conscience, I should be greatly worried to-night. Instead, I am perfectly serene. I know that I am honestly serving my country and him whom I love and to whom I owe so much.

The Yugoslav Minister is concerned about events in Croatia and asks us to increase our vigilance over Pavelic. On this matter I give him at once the most ample assurances.

MARCH 8, 1940. A theatrical gesture, dear to the common tastes of the Germans: von Mackensen informs me that Ribbentrop will be in Rome on Sunday, bringing with him Hitler's reply to the Duce. He adds pompously that he [Ribbentrop] will pay a visit to the Pope. I telephone Mussolini, emphasizing the inadvisability of such a move just at a time when the coal business has made our relations with London so delicate. But the Duce is perfectly satisfied, and nothing remains for me but to let the Germans know that we welcome the visit.

Frankly, I dislike all this. It will have a far-reaching effect on the whole world just when we ought not to add fuel to the fire. Furthermore, I dread the Duce's contact with the Germans. In these last few days his hostile attitude toward the Allies has become more pronounced. The thought of war dominates him, and it will dominate him even more if the offensive on the Western Front begins. Inaction will then go against the grain of his aggressive temperament. In the circumstances, Ribbentrop will need no great power of oratory to urge on the Duce a course which he, the Duce, desires with all his soul. With respect to Ribbentrop's visit to the Pope, I judge it to be a gesture as phony as it is futile.

MARCH 9, 1940. We were finally able to reach an agreement with the British on the matter of the ships held up by them. The ships were released with their cargoes on condition that none of our ships are to be sent to northern ports for the purpose of loading German coal for Italy. I tell Charles this evening that the agreement pleased me in a very special way, and he, being quicker than he would have me believe, replied that my remark made it unnecessary for him to ask any questions regarding Ribbentrop's visit—which will be very unpopular in Italy.

I tell Pavolini to display the news about the agreement with London in the best way possible. Ribbentrop will not like this, but it will help to counteract, within and without our boundaries, the unfavourable impression of his visit.

MARCH 10, 1940. The meeting at the station is rather cool. The crowd, that had with some difficulty been gathered by the police, showed a good deal of reserve. As we drove away von Ribbentrop at once stated that the fine weather we were having brought the moment for action nearer and arrogantly uttered this phrase: "Within a few months the French army will be destroyed and the British on the Continent will be prisoners of war." The same phrase was also repeated to the Duce during the conference.

Von Ribbentrop is the bearer of Hitler's letter: a long document in which there are many unimportant things, but in which two fundamental points are emphasized—that he intends to settle the conflict by force of arms and that Italy's place will inevitably be at the side of Germany. Von Ribbentrop dilutes these ideas into many words. Mussolini listens and promises to answer to-morrow, after having meditated over the letter as well as over the interview. And he immediately joins Hitler in affirming that the place of Fascism is at the side of Nazism in the firing-line. The conference was quite cordial and without outbursts on either side.

After the interview, when we were left alone, Mussolini says that he does not believe in the German offensive nor in a complete German success. He has not yet come to a firm conclusion. He wants to think it over further. To-day, at any rate, von Ribbentrop has not scored any decisive advantage.

MARCH 11, 1940. To-day it has been Mussolini's turn to talk. The stenographic report of to-day's conference has been made and will be found elsewhere. The Duce expressed himself calmly, avoiding grandiloquent phrases, but could not restrain himself from alluding repeatedly to two obligations (implicit in the present state of affairs) which he intends to abide by, and which above all represent his deepest convictions. He declared that, reserving his freedom to choose the date, he intends to intervene in the conflict and to fight a war parallel to that of Germany; in a word, to join Ger-

many. The principal reason for this is that he considers Italy imprisoned in the Mediterranean. Von Ribbentrop tried to dot his i's as much as possible, asking permission to reinforce our troops on the French frontier in order to cause a concentration of forces on the other side. He then proposed that within a short time a meeting between Hitler and Mussolini should take place at the Brenner Pass. The Duce quickly accepted the proposal, which I consider very hazardous because of the immediate consequences it may have, and also because of its influence on the future. I shall try to talk it over with the Duce.

Thus von Ribbentrop's visit ended. If he wanted to reinforce the Axis, he has succeeded. If, on the other hand, he wanted to accelerate our intervention, he has not achieved his aim, although he may have secured from Mussolini some new but not very useful compromises.

MARCH 12, 1940. This morning Mussolini insistently asked for the Berlin version of yesterday's conversations, which has not yet been received here. He says he fears that there might be some error, but in reality he believes he has gone too far in his commitment to fight against the Allies. He would now like to dissuade Hitler from his land offensive, an idea to which he returns over and over again. Italian inaction, which already weighs heavily on the Duce, would be unbearable if the German forces really entered the struggle. Thus he hopes to prevail on Hitler, and this is the result that he expects to achieve at the meeting at the Brenner Pass. I express my opposition to this.

The Germans know by now that the Duce is opposed to the land offensive, but they have let us know that they will go ahead just the same. It is therefore useless for us to insist. But if the German offensive is preceded by a meeting at the Brenner Pass I shall always consider Mussolini in a certain measure responsible for the great massacre. Neither can it be denied that the Duce is fascinated by Hitler, a fascination which involves something deeply rooted in his make-up. The Führer will get more out of the Duce than Ribbentrop was able to. With the necessary tact, I told the Duce this; he partly agreed with me, but insisted that he cannot now decline the offer of

a meeting with Hitler. He is probably right in this. I can therefore only redouble my recommendations for prudence.

MARCH 13, 1940. Von Ribbentrop telephones and asks to set the date of the meeting at the Brenner Pass for Monday, March 18th. At first Mussolini exploded: "These Germans are unbearable; they don't give one time to breathe nor to think matters over." But then he concluded that in view of the existing state of affairs, since the meeting must take place, it had better take place at once. So I confirm to von Ribbentrop the date chosen by him. Nevertheless, the Duce was nervous. Until now he has lived under the illusion that a real war would not be waged. The prospect of an imminent clash in which he might remain an outsider disturbs him and, to use his own words, humiliates him. He still hopes, but less than before, that he can influence Hitler and persuade him to desist from his intention to attack.

Poncet would like some information. I am quite reserved with him, but I do not conceal the fact that I consider the clash now imminent. As regards us, I tell him that we shall maintain the political line that we have followed up to this moment.

Casertano makes a report of the condition of the Party: terrible. Muti, on whose behalf I am not going to make any effort, has shown himself presumptuous and untrustworthy, and, as often happens, is less devoted to me than I thought he was. It only remains for me to abandon him to his fate.

MARCH 14, 1940. While playing golf, Count Acquarone, Minister of the Royal House, approached me. He talked openly of his concern about the situation, and assured me that the King is also aware of the impoverishment of the country. In his opinion, the King feels that it may become necessary for him to intervene at any moment to give things a different direction; he is prepared to do this and to do it quickly. Acquarone repeats that the King has for me "more than benevolence—a real affection and much trust". Acquarone, I cannot say whether by his own initiative or by order of the King, wanted to go deeper into the subject, but I kept the conversation on general lines.

Mussolini is more and more preoccupied about the meeting at the Brenner Pass. He would like to get from Hitler a signed

document in the shape of a communiqué which would give him a certain latitude or freedom of action to stay out, even if hostilities should begin on the Western Front. This seems difficult to me, because Hitler, too, has his public opinion to consider, and he would not be forgiven if he played his cards badly and lost his Italian trump. It would be better if we made the Germans understand that they are repeating the old Salzburg story. They do things and undo them without consulting us, frequently acting against our views. Their present dealings, as those of former times, offer a suitable pretext to insist on our freedom of action.

MARCH 15, 1940. Nothing new.

MARCH 16, 1940. Two conferences with Sumner Welles—at the Palazzo Chigi and the Palazzo Venezia. Stenographic reports are to be found elsewhere. The most important result is this: in London and in Paris there does not exist any of the uncompromising attitude which their speeches and the papers indicate. If they had certain guarantees of security they would be ready to give in more or less and to recognize the fait accompli. I think that if they really go along this path, they are moving towards defeat. If Hitler is still doubtful about when to deliver the attack, his doubts will be dispelled at once when he learns from Mussolini of these shilly-shallyings of the democracies. But I do not believe he has any doubts. From the haste with which Hitler wanted to fix the meeting, from the fact that he did not want to remain at the Brenner Pass more than an hour and a half, Mussolini deduces that within a short time he will set off the powder keg. To-day the Duce is calmer. He intends to keep his solidarity with Germany, but he does not intend to enter the war—at least for the time being. He said: "I shall do as Bertoldo did. He accepted the death sentence on condition that he choose the tree on which he was to be hanged. Needless to say, he never found that tree.<sup>198</sup> I shall agree to enter the war, but reserve for myself the choice of the moment. I alone intend to be the judge, and a great deal will depend upon how the war goes." These intentions encourage me, but only up to a certain point. To push

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<sup>198</sup> Bertoldo is the wise fool in Gulio Cesare Croce's work, "Bertoldo, Bertoldino and Cacaseno".

Mussolini on is an easy undertaking, but to pull him back is difficult.

MARCH 17, 1940. Welles has telephoned Roosevelt, asking for permission to undertake a certain vague attempt for peace, but the answer is in the negative. The whole tone of the telephone call gives one the impression that Roosevelt does not wish to commit himself beyond a certain point, and certainly not before he has carefully examined the results of his colleague's European mission.

At 1.30 p.m. we start for the Brenner Pass. Mackensen, rather embarrassed, tells me that the Führer has expressed a wish for the conversation to begin between the Duce and himself alone. (Alfieri says that he learned from Frau Mackensen that Hitler wishes to keep Ribbentrop at a distance, but this seems to me one of Alfieri's flights of imagination.) During the journey I talked at length with Mussolini. He is calm and, at heart, glad that Hitler has called on him. He believes that hostilities will start at any moment, and he repeats to me his latest theory on our position if this should happen. The Italian forces, he says, will constitute the left wing which will tie up an equal number of enemy troops without fighting, but ready, none the less, to go into action at a convenient moment.

During our journey the first telegrams begin to arrive from the capitals, where news of the meeting has been announced. They express surprise and amazement, and, in general, the tendency is to connect the event with Sumner Welles's presence in Rome.

MARCH 18, 1940. It is snowing at the Brenner Pass. Mussolini is waiting for his guest with anxious elation. Recently he has felt more and more the fascination of the Führer. His military successes—the only successes that Mussolini really values and desires—are the cause of this. While we were waiting, he tells me that he had a dream during the night "which tore away the veil from the future". But he does not say what the dream is. On the other hand, he says that this has happened at other times, when, for example, he had dreamed of fording a stream, and learned that the Fiume question was about to be solved.

The Hitler meeting is very cordial on both sides. The con-



ference, of which a stenographic report is to be found elsewhere, is more a monologue than anything else. Hitler talks all the time, but is less agitated than usual. He makes few gestures and speaks in a quiet tone. He looks physically fit. Mussolini listens to him with interest and with deference. He speaks little and confirms his intention to move with Germany. He reserves to himself only the choice of the right moment (it reminds me of the tree of Bertoldo). The conference ends with a short meal.

Later Mussolini gives me his impressions. He did not find that uncompromising attitude in Hitler which von Ribbentrop had led him to expect. Yesterday, too, von Ribbentrop only opened his mouth to harp on Hitler's inflexibility. Mussolini believes that Hitler will think twice before he jumps into an offensive.

The meeting has not substantially altered our position.

MARCH 19, 1940. The criss-crossing of speculations regarding the reasons for, and the results of, the Brenner meeting continue, and, as always happens, those reasons that are most natural and therefore true are disregarded. In Rome yesterday the meeting was interpreted as a step toward peace, and the city celebrated. This made me think how difficult it would be to make it celebrate an announcement of war in the same way.

I saw Sumner Welles and briefly posted him on the situation: no more than an Axis domestic incident which leaves things exactly as they were before. He is glad that there is no threat of an immediate military clash. Roosevelt will in this way have time to study Welles's reports, and perhaps to take some peace steps. Welles also talks about a possible meeting between Mussolini and Roosevelt in the Azores—a rather complicated project for results so uncertain.

Percy Loraine asks for news. I put him at ease. The Brenner meeting is no prelude to surprises in our policy. This is what he wanted to hear.

In thinking over his meeting with Hitler, and while waiting to read Schmidt's<sup>199</sup> reports, the Duce is convinced that Hitler

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<sup>199</sup> Gustave Paul Schmidt: Hitler's interpreter.

is not preparing to launch the land offensive. As a matter of fact, Mussolini resented the fact that Hitler did all the talking; he had in mind to tell him many things, and instead he had to keep quiet most of the time, a thing which, as dictator, or rather the dean of dictators, he's not in the habit of doing.

MARCH 20, 1940. Chamberlain's outburst yesterday in the House of Commons, in speaking of the "two gentlemen who have met at the Brenner Pass", is very significant, but Mussolini has not attached any importance to it, nor has he alluded to it. Poncet, too, has expressed himself regretfully about the meeting, and my words did little to convince him that there is nothing new. "You are mistaken," he said. "In fact the Duce has put his money on the wrong horse, and now he is doubling his bet. But the Franco-British horse, even if at the beginning of the race it may lag behind, will win in the last lap." He spoke of the French Cabinet crisis and very sceptically about Daladier, who will form an insignificant Cabinet because he does not care to surround himself with strong men. He considers that Reynaud is the right man.

Sumner Welles before leaving spoke clearly to Blasco d'Aieta, who is a relative of his. Even without undertaking any offensive, Germany will be exhausted within a year. He considers the war already won by the French and English. The United States is there with all the weight of her power to guarantee this victory. He deplored the fact that Italy, for which country he has a great deal of sympathy, should continue to get more and more deeply involved with one who is destined to suffer a harrowing defeat.

MARCH 21, 1940. Nothing new.

MARCH 22, 1940. Nothing new.

MARCH 23, 1940. I receive Count Teleki at the station, and later am present at the unveiling of the tablets with the new names of the streets near Montecitorio which are dedicated to the memory of my father's military exploits. Mussolini, who is in good humour these days and quite talkative, is growing every day more definitely pro-German. He now speaks openly of entering the war at the side of Germany and even defines our course of action: defensive in the Alps, defensive in Libya, offensive in Ethiopia against Jibuti and Kenya, aero-naval

offensive in the Mediterranean. The Duce's attitude is beginning to influence many Fascist leaders, who, either because they follow him, or out of personal conviction, are lining up in the ranks of the interventionists: Muti, Ricci, and, to a greater extent, Revel and Riccardi, who is no longer telling unpleasant truths as he used to do. Against the adventure are Grandi and Bottai. The latter naturally are among those who hold positions that they don't want to lose; the people of all social levels want nothing to do with war. Starace tells me that the Duce made some very warlike speeches to him, and that this morning he said to General Galbiati, commander of the University Student Volunteers: "Hold yourself ready. Shortly we will march in the West." Starace himself mixes much water with his wine. He affirms that the internal conditions of the country are precarious and "almost dangerous".

MARCH 24, 1940. I play golf with Teleki. He repeats that 95 per cent of the Hungarians detest Germany. He desires only to keep his country out of the conflict and hopes that Italy may do likewise. Villani again alludes to the question of the crown. He confirms the Magyar intention to offer it to some member of the House of Savoy.

Mussolini again has one of his anti-clerical outbursts. He attacks the clergy on the grounds of faith, honesty, and morals. He says that in numerous towns in southern Italy the population almost forces the priest to take a concubine, since only in this way will their wives be left undisturbed.

MARCH 25, 1940. A long conference with Count Teleki. I find him detached and reasonable as regards Magyar claims. He realizes what a danger it would be to Hungary to incorporate a disproportionate number of foreign minorities. The very life of the country would be affected by it. Besides, he will not do anything against Rumania because he does not want to make himself responsible, even indirectly, for having opened the doors of Europe to Russia. No one would pardon him for this, not even Germany. Teleki has avoided taking any open position one way or the other, but has not hidden his sympathy for the Western Powers, and fears a complete German victory like the plague.

In the afternoon I talked with the Duce and General Soddu.

The Germans offer us the immediate delivery of some anti-aircraft batteries. Mussolini plans on sending for them at once. Soddu agrees, but he does not want any German personnel. This supplying of weapons, which the Germans will hasten to reveal publicly, will make London and Paris still more acutely suspicious.

MARCH 26, 1940. With the Duce during the morning. I do not talk of politics. He praises Friedrich Wilhelm, who, by kicking around the women and cudgelling the priests who tried to seduce his soldiers, created the Prussia of to-day. During the conversation the Duce was scintillating and pungent; but he is wrong in admiring the Prussians as "a philosophical breed".

In the afternoon I bring Teleki to him, and there is more or less a repetition of yesterday's conference. The Duce makes it clear that he does not intend to remain neutral to the end, and that at a certain moment he will intervene at the side of Germany. Teleki receives this declaration with very limited enthusiasm.

MARCH 27, 1940. A visit from Poncet, who is getting ready to confer with Reynaud. He was deeply impressed by the turn affairs have taken, and he wanted to know if he must now consider that the die has been cast. I tried to calm him, but did not succeed, because he is shrewd, and, besides, recent events have been only too clear and eloquent. Poncet tried again to put before us the possibility of negotiations for conditions more favourable to Italy, and he has gone so far as to talk about the cession of French Somaliland. I did not accept these offers, which, for that matter, were vague, and have told him that Mussolini's state of mind is not much inclined to negotiation. In fact, when I told Mussolini about the conference with the French Ambassador, he quickly answered that French offers are always made in bad faith and with the sole practical aim of "compromising and defaming us".

Caruso presents a report on the conditions of the Bohemian protectorate. Apparently things are going better, and the ferocity of German pressure has abated. But there is a storm brewing. If one day the wind changes, not one German will get out alive.

At luncheon Teleki asks me abruptly: "Do you play bridge?"

"Why?" "For the day when we are together in the Dachau concentration camp." Such is the real state of mind of this man.

MARCH 28, 1940. A long conversation last evening with the Prince of Piedmont. Though he is usually cautious and reserved, he revealed, without exposing himself too much, his concern about the growing pro-German direction of our policy—a concern which was aggravated, he said, by his knowledge of our present military position. He denies that since September there has been any real improvement in our armed forces; supplies are scarce and morale is low. He talks apprehensively about the Fascist militia, which he thinks does not represent the volunteer spirit of the Army, but rather constitutes a group of dissatisfied and undisciplined men.

I discuss the Party with the Duce. I agree with him that if we are really moving towards war Muti is not the right man to develop Fascist organizations to the limit, and to vest them with power. Mussolini is concerned about it, but then, as is usual for him now, concluded optimistically: "I myself will galvanize the party at the right time, and I will do it in the manner of Frederick the Great."

Another conversation with Teleki. Nothing new, but he opens his anti-German heart to me. He hopes for the defeat of Germany, not a complete defeat—that might provoke violent shocks—but the kind of defeat that would blunt her teeth and claws for a long time.

MARCH 29, 1940. A report presented by Melchiori,<sup>200</sup> who has spent a month in Germany, has had a definite influence on the Duce's mind. I do not know the value of this individual's observations. He is a shining example of amorality, of greedy ambition, ineptitude, and ignorance, who does not know a single word of German and spends his time in the ante-rooms of the consulates and the Embassy begging for second-hand information, which he then cooks up in a rather vulgar style. The trouble is that Mussolini takes him seriously. Few documents have struck him lately as much as the Melchiori report, in which even though he reaches the conventional conclusion of "an unavoidable German victory", he also brings

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<sup>200</sup> Alessandro Melchiori: Italian journalist, an informer, very close to Mussolini.

out the difficult living conditions of the German people. This report has not substantially modified the decisions of the Duce, but for the first time he has admitted that Germany is not lying on a bed of roses, and that the failure of the offensive or a long-drawn-out war would mean defeat, and hence the collapse of the German regime. "I do not understand," he said, "why Hitler does not realize this. I feel that Fascism is wearing out—a wear and tear which is not deep, but is nevertheless noticeable, and he does not feel it in Germany, where the crisis has already assumed rather alarming proportions."

MARCH 30, 1940. The Germans raise objections to our recognition of the Wang Ching-wei Government.<sup>201</sup> It is now too late after the telegram which I sent him with the intention of widening the gulf which separates our policy from the Russians. I mention it to the Duce and point out the danger of doing something that is not welcome to Japan. He agrees, and inveighs against von Ribbentrop, "a truly sinister man, because he is an imbecile and presumptuous."

Molotov's speech cannot have pleased Germany, because it is quite different from the tone of that used by von Ribbentrop towards Moscow.

Mussolini is irritated for the hundredth time at Catholicism, which is to blame for "having made Italy universal, hence preventing it from becoming national. When a country is universal it belongs to everybody but itself."

MARCH 31, 1940. Word reaches me from many quarters that the Duce intends to dismiss me from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. I do not believe it. In any case, if this should happen, I would be delighted to leave this job in which I have served for almost four years—and what years!—carrying my head high. Everything I have done has been for the sole purpose of serving my country and the Duce, and whenever I took a stand which seemed to conflict with that of the Duce I did so to defend his position against attacks from abroad. This has been the true and innermost cause of my incurable resentment, nourished and reaffirmed, against the Germans since the days of Salzburg. But all this is of no account. The

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<sup>201</sup> Wang Ching-wei: Japanese-controlled Puppet Prime Minister of China.

Duce will do whatever he wishes. *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit.*

I read the whole text of Molotov's speech. On two points he is harsh with us, and this is of some help in avoiding the understanding which Berlin wishes us to have with the Russians.

Mussolini is indignant with Sumner Welles because he told Chamberlain that, while not actually having suffered a stroke, the Duce looks, nevertheless, very tired and perturbed. We learned this from one of the usual telegrams lifted from the British Embassy.

APRIL 1, 1940. Von Mackensen, on his return from Berlin, hands me a stenographic report of the Brenner Pass meeting. It is not in the style of other reports made by Schmidt. It is a much abridged summary. It appears that Hitler had made some objection about furnishing the copy. The Ambassador, on the orders of von Ribbentrop, speaks once more of Italo-Russian relations and he asks, with some hesitation, because he does not personally agree with his master, that our press should publish articles "more or less praising the Soviet". I refuse flatly. We cannot do such an undignified somersault and Molotov's speech is certainly not a document that justifies such a gesture on our part. The Duce approves, and concludes that "the best we can do for Russia is to be silent, and that is a great deal."

After reading the report, Mussolini repeats that it is his intention to write to Hitler to dissuade him from attempting his land offensive, which is equivalent to putting all his money on a single card. I encourage this move by the Duce because either Hitler will attack just the same and Mussolini will resent it and, God willing, will have another pretext to break away, or Hitler will not attack and the war will fizzle out in the course of a few months. It will go well for us either way. But von Mackensen and our Embassy in Berlin agree in asserting that the offensive will take place, and perhaps in a short time.

APRIL 2, 1940. Violent turn of the wheel in the direction of war. To-day Mussolini wants full steam ahead to open conflict if France and Great Britain really intend, as they announce, to tighten the blockade. As Goering, in a conference with Colonel Teucci, had said that he wanted to be informed about the Italian position, Mussolini telegraphed that Goering should

be told that he is hastening preparations. And yet no one asked him to do so. The Duce tells me that he has drawn up a memorandum concerning our plan of political and strategic action. He will give me a copy and on Saturday he will call together seven responsible men who will be informed about the document.

In the Council of Ministers, too, he expresses his belligerent frame of mind. He foresees that the war may begin at any moment, and apart from the fact that he does not want to appear servile to the democracies (which would bring us into conflict with the Germans), and the fact that if we remain neutral Italy would lose prestige among the nations of the world for a century as a Great Power and for eternity as a Fascist regime, he concludes that we shall move with the Germans to advance our own ends. He speaks of a Mediterranean empire and of access to the ocean. He believes blindly in German victory and in the word of Hitler concerning our share of the booty. But even accepting German victory as an accomplished fact (and I strongly reject the hypothesis of victory), is it so certain that Hitler, who has never kept his word to anyone, will keep it to us?

APRIL 3, 1940. Nothing new.

APRIL 4, 1940. Nothing new.

APRIL 5, 1940. Last night I saw the German film of the conquest of Poland. I had previously refused to attend, but if I had been absent last night also, my absence would have been too conspicuous. It is a good film if the Germans wish merely to portray brute force, but it is bestial for purposes of propaganda. The audience, composed partly of pro-German officials and partly of self-appointed pro-German pimps, did not go beyond the limits of mere courtesy in its applause.

I received an impression of weakness on the part of the Allies this morning in my conversation with Dingli, legal adviser to the Embassy in London and a friend of Chamberlain. Grandi had a great deal of respect for this man, who impresses me as being of rather secondary importance. He brought a useless and very general message from the Prime Minister, one of those messages of good-will destined from the start to remain unanswered. But more important than this was the manifest lack



of faith in victory. If this really represented British morale, the fate of Europe would be tragically sealed. But I do not believe that it does.

Sumner Welles sent his Ambassador to tell me that the whole story about the map has no foundation, and that Reynaud never spoke to him about the new territorial distribution in Europe.

APRIL 6, 1940. I received from the Duce one of the eight copies of the secret report prepared by him summarizing the situation and outlining the military and political programme for the future. It is a measured document in which he arrives at the double conclusion that Italy can neither make an about-face nor remain neutral to the end of the conflict without losing her standing among the Great Powers. Therefore, we must fight on the side of Germany for our interests and when conditions are favourable. The plan of military action is this: defensive action on all fronts and offensive action towards Jibuti; aero-naval offensive in grand style. But the Duke of Aosta, whom I saw this morning, said that it is not only extremely problematical whether we can maintain our present positions, because the French and British are already equipped and ready for action, but the local population, among whom rebellion is still very much alive, would revolt as soon as they got any inkling of our difficulties. I talked about this to the Duce and, for what it was worth, repeated that Italy unanimously detests the Germans.

I informed Mussolini briefly of my conversation with Dingli, and he wanted me to suggest to Dingli, in his name, that he should attempt to bring about a compromise peace.

APRIL 7, 1940. A year has passed since we landed in Albania. This is a day that I remember with emotion. And, talking about Albania, General Favagrossa to-day refused the minimum financial subvention needed to solve the housing problem in Albania. With the best will in the world he can't give any money because he hasn't got it. With him I made a rapid survey of the situation with regard to our metal reserves. The results were very sad. Italy is losing all her foreign markets, and even the small amount of gold that we have to spend cannot be converted into the metals that we need. Internal resources are scarce, and we have already gone the limit in

gathering copper pans and iron grates. Everything is gone. The truth is that we are worse off to-day with regard to reserves than we were in September. We have enough stocks for only a few months of war. This is what Favagrossa states. Under such conditions, how can we dare to enter the war?

I talked to Dingli and told him that in the event of Chamberlain being ready to offer possible conditions we could become intermediaries for his proposals and facilitate a compromise. Otherwise, they must entertain no illusions. Italy will be at the side of Germany. Dingli is satisfied with his mission and is getting ready to return to London to report. I have the vague impression that I shall not hear of him again. A man of little account.

APRIL 8, 1940. There is alarm in Budapest. Teleki has sent to Rome one of his messengers, Baranay, to inform us of an approach made by the German General Staff to the Hungarian General Staff. On the pretext that Russia will soon move into Bessarabia, Germany intends to occupy the Rumanian oil fields and asks for free passage through Hungary. The price for this permission would be Transylvania. For the Hungarians there arises the problem either of letting the Germans pass, or of opposing them with force. In either case Hungarian liberty would come to an end. Acceptance would spare them devastation and ruin, while fighting, though more painful for the moment, would prepare for a future rebirth. Villani and Baranay advocated resistance and hoped for Italian aid. I accompanied them to the Duce, who reserved his answer, though in principle he advised acceptance. He repeated to them, also, that he stands firmly with Germany, that he is getting ready to fight against the French and British. We have sent a telegram to Berlin to learn how much truth there is in what the Hungarians say. Nobody has told us anything; in fact, the Germans have so far assured us of exactly the opposite. But experience proves that this doesn't mean very much.

APRIL 9, 1940. They did not march in the direction of Rumania.

A secretary of the German Embassy came to my house at two o'clock in the morning, bearing a letter from Mackensen, who asked to be received at seven o'clock in the morning.

Nothing else. He arrived at 6.30, pale and tired, and communicated Hitler's decision to occupy Denmark and Norway, adding that this decision had already been acted upon. He made no comments, but agreed with me whole-heartedly when I told him that the reaction of the neutrals, and especially of the Americans, would be violent. Then we went to the Duce to give him a written message from Hitler—the usual letter, in the usual style, announcing what he had already done. Mussolini said: "I approve Hitler's action whole-heartedly. It is a gesture that can have incalculable results, and this is the way to win wars. The democracies have lost the race. I shall give orders to the press and to the Italian people unreservedly to applaud this German action." Mackensen went out of the Palazzo Venezia glowing.

Later, I returned with the Hungarians to Mussolini. Attolico has denied the rumour of an attack on Rumania. The Duce advised the Hungarians, therefore, to keep calm and moderate, and to accede to the German requests. This was not the answer the Hungarians expected and hoped for. They went so far as to ask whether, in the case of military resistance, they could count on Italian help. Mussolini smiled. "How could this ever be," he said, "since I am Hitler's ally and intend to remain so?"

When we were alone, the Duce talked about Croatia. His hands fairly itch.

He intends to quicken the tempo, taking advantage of the disorder that reigns in Europe. But he didn't go into details, except to say that he is convinced that an attack against Yugoslavia will not lead France and Britain to strike at us. But what if this should not happen? Are we ready to fight? Balbo and the Duke of Aosta have talked to me about their respective operational sectors in the last few days in such terms as to leave very little room for illusions.

The first indefinite news of fighting and resistance in Norway is coming in. I hope that the news is true; in the first place, because of the reactions that such an unusual struggle will have on world opinion; second, to show that there are still people who know how to fight in defence of human dignity.

APRIL 10, 1940. News of the German action in the

north has had favourable repercussions among the Italian people, who, as Mussolini says, "like a whore are always on the side of the winner". More surprising than the speed of the German action is the Franco-British reaction. The Allies reply to Hitler's military success with a barrage of speeches and articles.

Returning from Paris, François-Poncet was very downcast to-day—a mood that sharply contrasts with his lively and provocative temperament. He spoke of "surprises which time would bring", of "battles lost and wars won", of "the United States that will not permit Hitler's victory". I agree. But I should like to see more decisive action. In France, everybody, or almost everybody, is now convinced that Italy is preparing to go against them, but nothing will be done that might provoke or accelerate such an Italian decision. They would like to leave the whole responsibility to us. Poncet personally pointed out the danger of precipitating matters.

Mackensen came to see me on some pretext. He wanted to know what were our further reactions to what had happened. I showered him with felicitations and eulogies, since there is now nothing else to do, even though I firmly believe that the last word has not yet been spoken, and that we may witness a complete change in the situation—perhaps soon.

APRIL 11, 1940. An urgent message from Hitler to the Duce. I went with von Mackensen to Villa Torlonia at 11 p.m., where Mussolini, contrary to his usual custom, was standing waiting for us. He had a bad cold and was feverish and tired, but glad to receive Hitler's message. To-day he has prepared an enthusiastic answer. In it he says that, from to-morrow, the Italian fleet will be ready, that our preparation in the air and on land is proceeding at an accelerated pace, and, finally, he calls Hitler's attention to the ambiguous Rumanian attitude, at the same time expressing a desire to safeguard peace in that sector of Europe for the time being. Hitler has received Attolico and mentioned with satisfaction the message from the Duce. He has given optimistic reports on the course of the present aero-naval battle. I wonder. Only time will prove whether the Führer has acted as a strategist or has run into a dangerous trap.

This morning Mussolini was gloomy. He had returned from

a conference with the King that had not satisfied him. He said: "The King would like us to enter only to gather up the broken dishes. I hope that they will not break them over our heads before that. And then it is humiliating to remain with our hands folded while others write history. It matters little who wins. To make a people great it is necessary to send them to battle even if you have to kick them in the pants. This is what I shall do. I do not forget that in 1918 there were 540,000 deserters in Italy. And if we do not take advantage of this occasion to pit our Navy against the French and British forces, what is the use of building 600,000 tons of warships? Some coast-guards and some yachts would be enough to take the young ladies on a joy-ride."

APRIL 12, 1940. I go to bed with a very bad cold and remain there until the 20th.

APRIL 20, 1940. My illness gave rise to much gossip. They talked about a "diplomatic illness", and Rome is filled with rumours about my resignation. Naturally, the German successes have caused many desertions in the ranks of my so-called friends. On the other hand, it was an old anti-Fascist, Alberto Giannini, who took a courageous stand by writing to the Duce, imploring him not to dismiss me, as this would increase the country's confusion. Mussolini was sympathetic and said that he wished, first of all, to do something that will cut short all these rumours; then he told Buffarini and Muti that I am the man who enjoys his full confidence.

No news from the interior of the country during my days of absence. A letter from Hitler to bring the situation up to date. The letter was naturally in an optimistic tone. To the Duce Hitler uses words that go straight to his heart and produce the desired effect. In the evening Prince Hesse talked to me about the imminent offensive, and told me that Hitler blames the bad weather for his not having been able to celebrate his birthday in Paris.

After ten days I have found Mussolini more warlike and more pro-German than ever, but he says that he will do nothing before the end of August, that is, after improving preparations and after the harvest. Thus only three months remain to give us a ray of hope.

APRIL 21, 1940. The Duce's speech from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia was sober and controlled, while the one that he made to the representatives of the labour confederations inside the palace was extreme and wholly pro-Nazi. Immediately afterwards, however, he told me to try to lessen the repercussions of his speech in the diplomatic corps, because "up to the second half of August there is no sense in talking of war".

APRIL 22, 1940. This morning the date for Italy's entry into this war was changed to the spring of 1941 because, according to the Duce, Norway has further removed the centre of the European field of operations as well as making a solution to the conflict more remote. Naturally this does not mean that he has in the least changed his attitude. It seems that he had a rather excited meeting with the King, during which Mussolini asserted that "Italy to-day is in fact a British colony, and certain Italians would be disposed to make this a legal fact, that is, they would make of her a Malta multiplied by a million", and he added: "I saw the old man turn pale." But alas, the King, who is so much against the war, can do no more to guard against it.

I saw François-Poncet. He was excited and depressed and talked about the imminence of Italian military operations, so imminent, in fact, it seemed that they could begin any day now. I tried to put him right a bit, and he left my room better informed on our policy, and, above all, more serene. I did the same thing with the American Ambassador, who more and more reveals himself to be a friend and a gentleman. I did the same also with certain other foreign diplomats of minor importance.

APRIL 23, 1940. I exercise a soothing influence on Noel Charles, the British Chargé d'Affaires, who, although he is of a reserved temperament, has not remained indifferent to last week's outburst of alarmist rumours, which began with my illness. I repeat: Italy stands solidly behind Germany, but does not intend, until further notice, to make its solidarity more concrete by letting the few guns Badoglio disposes of thunder in place of the paper guns of Virginio Gayda.<sup>202</sup> It

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<sup>202</sup> Virginio Gayda: Editor of "Giornale d'Italia", Mussolini's vituperative mouth-piece. Killed in U.S. air raid on Rome in March, 1944.

seems to me that the French and British should be satisfied, and I believe that as long as it lasts they certainly will be satisfied.

Renzetti<sup>203</sup> has spoken to me again about what might be called Goering's tragi-comedy of the collar of the Annunziata. It seems that the heart of the big Marshal is still as filled with desperate sadness as when he first saw the picturesque, glittering scenes of the Annunciation hanging from von Ribbentrop's neck. I speak of it to the Duce. We must not let the voluminous quasi-dictator of the Reich suffer any longer. And Mussolini, who has a sincere scorn for these honours, authorizes me to write the King a letter of appeal to describe the pitiful situation of the tender Hermann and to propose that a suitable pendant be given him on May 22nd, the melancholy anniversary of the Alliance. Let's hope the King will accede to the proposal, because in the matter of the collar of the Annunziata he is cautious and reserved.

APRIL 24, 1940. François-Poncet has brought a sealed letter from Paul Reynaud to the Duce. He was somewhat resentful that he, the Ambassador of France, should be the bearer of a message as to the contents of which he is kept in complete ignorance, and he fired a few darts at his Government while at the same time speaking well of Reynaud: "He is a man who has always had the courage to tell the bitter truth, but he has all the faults of men under five feet three. He elbows his way ahead for fear that he won't be taken seriously." Mussolini read the letter with pleasure and scorn. In truth, it is a strange message, a little melancholy and a little bragging, which, I believe, very well reflects the temperament of its author. It ends with a sort of invitation to a meeting before the two nations cross swords. Mussolini intends to answer with a refusal, adding some words to take the dramatics out of Reynaud's attitude. Naturally, the first thought of the Duce was to send Hitler a complete copy of the letter.

Von Mackensen, on his return from Berlin, comes to see me, and I go with him to the Duce. He speaks of the Hungarian proposal for a three-power conference, and is against it. This is a far-fetched idea of the restless Count Czaky. On his return

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<sup>203</sup> Renzetti: Italian Military Attaché in Berlin; Consul at Leipsig.

from the Palazzo Venezia, in his car, he mentions Attolico's position. I invite him to talk, and then he says that in Berlin they would now welcome his recall. That is natural. He is an Italian and a gentleman. As his successor, Hitler is thinking of Farinacci and Alfieri. I eliminate the first and dwell upon the second. I am sure that Mussolini will meet German wishes in this matter.

APRIL 25, 1940. I speak to the Duce on the question of the Ambassador to Germany. Mussolini accepts the nomination of Alfieri without objection, and I accompany the latter to the Palazzo Venezia. The Duce at once gives him some instructions on his approaching mission to Germany. He repeats his faithfulness to the Alliance, but as regards war he says that "he will enter it only when he has a quasi-mathematical certainty of winning it". Alfieri leaves the Mappamondo Hall with the conviction that he will have to go slowly and cautiously in Germany.

Giunta<sup>204</sup> in the Chamber has made an inconclusive and ill-bred speech of a distinctly pro-German character, and with such absurd implications that it stunned the Chamber. Mussolini, who had approved the first part of it, was struck by the cold atmosphere which the vulgar Germanic adoration of Giunta created in the hall. On the other hand, Pavolini, who has made his *début* as a Minister, had a great success.

APRIL 26, 1940. Young Barzini<sup>205</sup> was arrested. From one of the usual documents lifted for us from the British Embassy it appears that he had informed the British that we have a secret service operating effectively inside the Embassy itself, and that he had said that "Mussolini is insane", and that Italian journalists hated every line they were compelled to write by the Fascist party. Mussolini is furious and even threatens the Special Tribunal.

The answer to Reynaud is ready. A cold, cutting, and contemptuous letter. To-morrow I shall hand it to François-Poncet. To-night I shall send a copy to von Mackensen. I try to make the letter less harsh, at least in form, but my efforts had meagre

<sup>204</sup> Francesco Giunta: Italian lawyer. Secretary-General of the Fascist Party.

<sup>205</sup> Luigi Barzini: Journalist, son of Italian-American publisher: at one time editor of the Italian daily "Corriere d'America" in New York.



results. It is clear that the Duce's letter can be used by Reynaud against the remaining pro-Italian Frenchmen as proof of our provocative attitude. The Duce also sent a brief telephone message to Hitler to advise him to hold on to Narvik at all costs.

I obtained from the Duce the nomination of Attolico to the Holy See. I do not wish to give the Germans the impression that they can so easily get rid of a man of ours who has done his duty very well. Otherwise, God only knows where it will end and who will be the next victim to be sacrificed on the Nazi altar.

APRIL 27, 1940. After all, François-Poncet was neither surprised nor disturbed at Mussolini's answer to Reynaud. He did not know the text of Reynaud's letter, and I showed it to him. While he praised the spirit and the form of the letter, he said that it was evidently written by a man who, not knowing Mussolini, thinks that he can win him over by appeals to sentiment. This is a gravely mistaken idea which Poncet has tried for a long time, and in vain, to correct. His Government, in turn, was prevented from truly appraising the situation by those pro-Italian Frenchmen of Laval's type who are much encouraged by our own Ambassador, Guariglia. Mussolini's letter, described by him as "dry", will go a long way to set things straight.

I tell Attolico about Hitler's stab in the back. He takes it with a great deal of dignity and comes to the conclusion that it is an honour for him to end his mission in this manner. He is glad to go to the Vatican—from the Devil to Holy Water. He confirms briefly his judgment on the German situation: "A short war, a victory for the Reich; a long war, a victory for the Allies." He tells me that Ribbentrop does not conceal his dislike for me and that he considers me responsible for Italian non-intervention. I am proud of it.

In Berlin, Ribbentrop makes some declarations, advertised as sensational, on the Norwegian question. On the basis of a first reading it seems to me to be a case of the mountain giving birth to a mouse.

APRIL 28, 1940. Another letter from Hitler to the Duce to bring him up to date on his military successes in Norway. These letters are, in general, of meagre importance, but Hitler

is a good psychologist and he knows that these messages go straight to Mussolini's heart.

The Pope addressed a letter to the Duce, in which he eulogizes his efforts to keep the peace, and prays that in the future also Italy will stay out of the conflict. Mussolini's reaction to the letter was sceptical, cold, and sarcastic.

APRIL 29, 1940. Mussolini relates that the King was against granting the collar of the Annunziata to Goering, but that, willy-nilly, he will do it in the end. On the other hand, he very much approved of the reply to Reynaud. From the Duce's account it is clear that the conversations between him and the King are anything but cordial. In fact, they are a continuous quarrel, in which the Duce reaffirms with all the impetuous violence of his nature the need for the policy he is advocating, and the King, with the prudence that his position and character demand, strives to point out all the dangers implicit in such a policy. But, on the whole, Mussolini takes little account of the King's judgment, and thinks that the actual strength of the monarchy is negligible. He is convinced that the Italian people follow him and him alone. This morning he praised Blum, who, in an article in *Populaire*, said more or less the same thing.

A long conversation with Helfand, who is now playing the part of an official pro-German badly and weakly. I gave him information of a general character, and avoided every mention of policy which might alter the present situation between the two countries. After all, many Germans remain cool toward Moscow. Bismarck<sup>206</sup> himself was saying yesterday that the Russians must not be trusted for two reasons: because they are Bolshevik, and because they are Russian, and more for the second reason than for the first.

APRIL 30, 1940. Nothing new.

MAY 1, 1940. Phillips has a message from Roosevelt for the Duce. It is a warning not to enter the war, dressed in polite phrases, but none the less clear. If the conflict spreads, some States that intend to remain neutral will be obliged to revise their positions at once. Naturally, Mussolini accepted this with

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<sup>206</sup> Prince Otto von Bismarck: Counsellor of the German Embassy in Rome, married to Princess Anna Maria von Bismarck.

ill grace, considering that Roosevelt is openly in favour of the French and British. At the time he said little or nothing to the American Ambassador, except to reaffirm the Italian right to a window on the open sea. Then he personally wrote an answer to Roosevelt, cutting and hostile, in which he arrives at the conclusion that if the Monroe Doctrine has force for Americans, it must also have force for Europeans.

The British have decided not to let their shipping pass through the Mediterranean. I speak about it to Charles, and do not conceal my surprise at a measure that must be the prelude to war. (Fortunately, we have not gone that far yet. It is important that London should avoid measures that increase the existing nervous tension.) Charles agreed, but he was concerned about the speech of the Duce to the Fascist organizations on April 21st.<sup>207</sup> At a meeting of the Ministers Mussolini reaffirmed his certainty of a German victory. The formula he has adopted is: "In the struggle between the forces of conservatism and those of revolution it is always the latter that win."

Mussolini speaks to me again about a rapprochement with Russia.

MAY 2, 1940. The Duce sends a message to Hitler to inform him of the situation as it has developed in the last few days. He starts from this premise: "The feeling of the Italian people is unanimously against the Allies." Where does he get this information? Is he really sure of what he writes, or is it not true that, conscious of his personal influence, he is thinking of the opportune moment for modifying the national mood according to his whim? Dino Grandi is dissatisfied with the hostile reaction his speech in the Chamber has provoked in London and Paris. He recalls the pro-Axis talk which he gave in London last year, and calls it a blot on his character and on his life as well. He received only three telegrams: one from Starace, one from Morgagni,<sup>208</sup> and one from an inmate of a lunatic asylum in Catania, who offered to put the speech into verse for a hundred lire.

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<sup>207</sup> April 21st: The anniversary of the foundation of Rome.

<sup>208</sup> Manlio Morgagni: Fascist journalist; administrative director of "Popolo d'Italia."

The first accurate news on the German victory in Norway makes a deep impression. Chamberlain's speech makes an even deeper impression. It is so resignedly pessimistic as to admit the possibility of a German landing in England. Mussolini is exultant. He contemptuously dismisses the possibility of warships being sent into the Mediterranean, convinced as he is that the Allies will never take the initiative against us.

MAY 3, 1940. The news from Norway literally exalts the Duce, who, with ever-increasing emphasis, affirms his certainty of a German victory. From Berlin come telegrams that are filled with optimism. Von Ribbentrop tells Zamboni<sup>209</sup> that the offensive on the Maginot Line will be as rapid as it is sure. Goering, for the first time, urges Renzetti to hasten our intervention, because the war, to which he admits he had reasons to be opposed at the start, is now on its way toward speedy victory. I don't believe it. And even though we want to intervene, can we do so?

General Soddu says that now even Graziani, concerned over his responsibilities, expresses himself as clearly hostile to any warlike action on our part, including operations in Croatia.

Our greatest deficiency is in artillery. The Italian Navy knows the dangerous task that awaits it. The Duce complains of Admiral Cavagnari's lack of energy. Cavagnari is a gentleman and tells the truth.

Our Air Force is being built up laboriously. General Aimone Cat, one of the best technicians, has expressed himself very pessimistically, at the same time recognizing that what Pricolo has done has brought about some notable progress. He speaks even more gloomily about our anti-aircraft batteries. Very bad weapons, and badly trained personnel.

Franco sends a colourless message to the Duce, in which he confirms the absolute and unavoidable neutrality of a Spain preparing to bind up her wounds.

MAY 4, 1940. A new letter to the Duce from Hitler which consists of disconnected paragraphs. It contains details of the progress of the war in Norway. Hitler complains about the excessive rapidity of his victory, which has not permitted him

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<sup>209</sup> Giuseppe Zamboni: Italian Military Attaché in Berlin.

to involve the British forces more effectively so as to destroy them completely. For the first time the tone of the letter is ironical as to the military capacities of the Allies. He concludes by saying that he intends to obtain a victory in the West as soon as possible, and that he is impelled to do this by hidden threats of American intervention.

MAY 5, 1940. I spend the day at Leghorn. I wanted to kneel before my father and Maria. Beautiful weather; from the windows of my home we could see Corsica almost within reach of our hands. And yet at Leghorn, too, and even on the part of those who are most enthusiastic, the Mediterranean question is not very deeply felt. Anyway, not deeply enough to justify a war.

MAY 6, 1940. Audience with the King in order to obtain his signature to the laws that have been passed. His Majesty speaks to-day about his opposition to Germany, not very forcefully, and says that in his opinion the Italian military machine is still very weak. He advises going slow. For this reason the King recommends our remaining as long as possible in our present position of watchful waiting and preparation. He has decided to give the collar of the Annunziata to Goering, but rather unwillingly. Mussolini, who conferred with him about the matter, said: "Your Majesty, it's perhaps a lemon that you must gulp down, but everything suggests the advisability of making such a gesture at this moment."

Conference with Christic. His Government receives the declarations I made the other day with a sigh of relief. I believe that our situation will oblige us to keep to them for a long period of time.

MAY 7, 1940. Nothing new.

MAY 8, 1940. Percy Loraine has returned from London. From what he says, his instructions are to do everything he possibly can to safeguard relations between Italy and Great Britain "honourably and in good faith". He mentions the fact that our press campaigns have already strengthened the conviction in large sections of English public opinion that Fascist Italy is to be considered an enemy. This is serious, especially when the time comes to settle accounts at the end of the war, which he is sure will end victoriously for his country. I have

spoken frankly to him about our policy. The Duce intends to be true to the Facts that bind him to Berlin, but this does not mean that in the near future we are going to abandon our non-belligerency. These statements, dictated by Mussolini, disturbed Sir Percy, who, unfortunately, did not leave reassured. However, he remained very calm and altogether certain about the future of Great Britain.

I give von Mackensen a record of the meeting<sup>210</sup> of the British Ministers to the Balkans, which was furnished me by the British Embassy. I also speak of the ceremony for conferring the collar of the Annunziata on Goering. It can take place on the 22nd at the Brenner Pass, which will save me a speech and the making of a solemn reaffirmation of the Alliance—a task difficult and displeasing to me.

MAY 9, 1940. During the ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier I spoke with Badoglio, who now is less anti-German than before, since the Norwegian victory has had its effect on him even though he still defends non-belligerency fanatically. In his opinion, an attack on the Maginot Line would not be successful; he himself knows the Maginot Line, and believes that a break-through would require six months' action and the sacrifice of a million men. In talking to me about Badoglio, Mussolini said that he has convinced the Marshal of his thesis, as he had done before. I do not think this is so. In the face of the German successes, Badoglio is more prudent; but I do not admit that he is convinced.

Anfuso reports that Princess Bismarck, with whom he is on very friendly terms, told him with tears in her eyes that Germany is lost, that Hitler has ruined the country and its people. She spoke so convincingly that Anfuso suspected her of being an agent provocateur, but then many things in her speech changed his mind. Even more fiery words were pronounced by her against Ribbentrop and his policy.

MAY 10, 1940. This is for history: yesterday I dined poorly at the German Embassy. A long and boring after-dinner conversation, as varied as it is possible to have with Germans.

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<sup>210</sup> Meeting of British Ministers to the Balkans. Six British Ministers from Balkan and Danubian States were called to a meeting in London from April 8-15, 1940, with Lord Halifax, Foreign Secretary.

Not a word on the situation. When we left at 12.25 von Mackensen said that "*perhaps* he would have to disturb me during the night about a communication that he expected from Berlin", and took my private telephone number. At 4 a.m. he telephoned me to say that within three-quarters of an hour he would come to see me, and together we would go to the Duce, as he had had orders to confer with him at exactly 5 a.m. He would say nothing over the telephone about the reasons for the meeting. When he arrived at my house he had with him a large package of papers which certainly could not have arrived by telephone. He muttered with embarrassment an excuse about a diplomatic courier who had remained at the hotel until instructions to proceed had come from Berlin.

Together we went to the Duce, who, forewarned by me, had already got up. We found the Duce calm and smiling. He read Hitler's note, which listed the reasons for the invasion of Belgium and Holland, and concluded with a kind invitation to Mussolini to make the decisions he considers necessary for the future of his country. Then the Duce examined the accompanying papers for a long time. Finally, after almost two hours, he told Mackensen that he had been convinced that France and Great Britain were preparing to attack Germany through Belgium and Holland. He approved whole-heartedly of Hitler's action.

After Mackensen left, the Duce repeated to me his certainty about the rapid success of the Nazi armies, and also his decision to intervene. I did not fail to repeat that, for the time being, we should wait and see. This is a long-drawn-out affair, longer than we can possibly foresee now. He didn't deign to answer me. My remarks served only to annoy him. During the morning I saw him many times and, alas, I found that his idea of going to war was growing stronger and stronger. Edda, too, has been at the Palazzo Venezia, and, ardent as she is, told her father that the country wants war, and that to continue our attitude of neutrality would be dishonourable for Italy. Such are the speeches that Mussolini wants to hear, the only ones that he takes seriously.

I confer with Poncet, Loraine, and Phillips. They want news on the Italian attitude. They are rather sceptical and pessi-

mistic. From certain intercepted telephone messages it appears that they are expecting our intervention at any moment. I try to calm them down and partially succeed. On the other hand, they know very well my own ideas and with what sincerity I am trying to postpone the intervention.

Poncet is rather downcast. He has a tired air, red eyes, is unusually unkempt in his attire. Loraine is cold and determined. With an emphasis that is startling in such a phlegmatic and courteous gentleman he asserts that Germany will be destroyed. For a moment all the determination of his race came into his eyes and words. Phillips said that what has happened is bound to stir America profoundly. He made no prophecies, but I should not be surprised if the United States immediately broke relations with Germany as a prelude to intervention. And the United States is a very important factor to consider, although erroneous judgments are generally made about her.

Mussolini is preparing a message in answer to Hitler which is warm but not such as to commit us. I ask him to delete a phrase in which he associates himself with an accusation against the Allies to the effect that they were threatening Belgian neutrality. He listens to me and makes the change.

In leaving for Florence, Edda comes to see me and talks about immediate intervention, about the need to fight, about honour and dishonour. I listen with impersonal courtesy. It's a pity that she who is so intelligent should be incapable of reasoning. I think she does well to go to the Florentine musical festival, where she can busy herself more profitably with music.

I saw the Belgian Ambassador and the Netherlands Minister. They are sad but dignified, and both express themselves with a great deal of confidence in the ability of their countries to resist. General Soddu, on the contrary, maintains that the struggle on the Belgian-Dutch line will amount to nothing, while French defences will be absolutely unbreakable. He is, in any event, of the opinion that we should not take any initiative for at least a month after the beginning of the offensive.

I saw Pavelic. The Croatian situation is getting ripe and if we delay too long the Croats will line up with Germany. Now I shall prepare a map to indicate the precise positions of Croat forces and their most urgent needs. Then we shall pass to the



phase of execution. I have not fixed any particular moment; in fact, I have recommended that we avoid any premature explosion. We have received proof of the fact that Bombelles is a traitor on the pay-roll of Belgrade, and he will suffer under the merciless law of the Ustasci.

I report the conversation to the Duce. He says that we must act quickly. He makes notes on his calendar, somewhere near the first part of June, and decides to call Gambara back from Spain to take command of the forces that will carry out the break-through.

No direct news from the battle front, but from all that we hear it seems that things are going well for the Germans. What is especially surprising is the lack of Allied action in the air, while the others are bombing a hundred places.

The substitution of Churchill for Chamberlain is received here with absolute indifference; by the Duce with irony.

MAY 11, 1940. During the night some Fascists beat a British official who had torn down an anti-British manifesto, and Sir Percy Loraine came to me this morning to speak of the incident. Since he assumed a rather haughty tone, very much in contrast to our excellent personal relations, I answered in the same tone, refusing to give any explanation; on the other hand, emphasizing the fact that, while the British Army is fighting hard, British officials would be better advised to go to bed, rather than wander around bars until four o'clock in the morning. We parted so frostily that I thought it necessary to inform the Duce, because of possible future developments. But this evening Loraine telephoned me with his usual cordiality, and the incident has been closed.

Nothing new here. To-day Mussolini is less bellicose than he was yesterday, and more disposed to wait. It seems that the Italian General Staff has thrown most timely cold water on our present military prospects. Even Balbo has told me that we cannot go into the field for two months, and before having received a definite quantity of arms and military supplies.

MAY 12, 1940. The telegrams sent by the Pope to the rulers of the three invaded States have incensed Mussolini, who would like to curb the Vatican, and is inclined to go to extremes. In these last few days he often repeats that the papacy is a

cancer which gnaws at our national life, and that he intends, if necessary, to root it out once and for all. He added: "The Pope need not think that he can seek an alliance with the monarchy, because I am ready to blow both of them up to the skies at the same time. The seven cities of Romagna<sup>211</sup> will be sufficient to knock out King and Pope at the same time."

I do not share this policy of the Duce, because, if he intends to wage war, he must not provoke a crisis with the Church. The Italian people are Catholic but not bigoted. Superficially, maybe, they scorn the Church, but they are religious at heart, and especially in times of peril do they draw near the altars. I believe that it is indispensable for us to avoid any clash, and for this reason I give Alfieri instructions to proceed in a manner that will not have any of the controversial character the Duce wanted to give it.

The King sends word that he will give the collar of the Annunziata to Goering, but, nevertheless, wants to avoid sending him a telegram of congratulations with the notification. I shall try to find a way out. His Majesty desires that his wish be kept secret from Mussolini.

MAY 13, 1940. Mussolini began to talk as follows: "Some months ago I said that the Allies had lost the victory. To-day I tell you that they have lost the war. We Italians are already sufficiently dishonoured. Any delay is inconceivable. We have no time to lose. Within a month I shall declare war. I shall attack France and Great Britain in the air and on the sea. I am no longer thinking of taking up arms against Yugoslavia because it would be a humiliating expedient." To-day, for the first time, I did not answer. Unfortunately, I can do nothing now to hold the Duce back. He has decided to act, and act he will. He believes in German success and in the rapidity of this success. Only a new turn in military events can induce him to revise his decision, but for the time being things are going so badly for the Allies that there is no hope.

Alfieri has spoken to the Pope. He will make a written report, but meanwhile stresses the fact that he found a clear-cut intransigency in the attitude of the Church. The Pope has said

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<sup>211</sup> The seven cities of Romagna are Bologna, Modena, Reggio, Parma, Forlì, Ferrara and Ravenna, i.e. the most revolutionarily inclined part of Italy.

that "he is even ready to be deported to a concentration camp, but will do nothing against his conscience".

I see Poncet and Loraine. No discussion of any importance. Only tentative soundings. I try not to increase their apprehensions, but I honestly do not wish to hide the fact that the situation is growing more serious.

MAY 14, 1940. Letter from Hitler to the Duce. A long and calm account of military events. It has an assured note: victories on land, and, above all, victories in the air, over which at this time the Germans have uncontested dominion. Naturally, all this cannot but influence the Duce to intervene. He has also announced to von Mackensen his decision to enter the struggle soon. "It is now no longer a question of months, it is a question of weeks and perhaps days." I, at least, hope that it is more a matter of weeks than of days, for although the vicissitudes of war are turning in favour of the Germans, it is too soon to count our eggs and before making a supreme decision we must recall that Italy is not ready for war, or at least is only ready for a very short war. A mistake in timing would be fatal to us.

The Duce informs me that General Soddu has spoken to the King about the question of the Italian Supreme Command, which Mussolini wants to assume personally. It seems that His Majesty has resisted strongly, basing his own right to decide on the Constitution. However, he finally consented to a compromise, that is, a delegation of powers. Mussolini showed irritation. He said clearly that after the war was won he intended to get rid of a monarchy which he does not like and whose burden he can no longer tolerate.

MAY 15, 1940. Roosevelt sends a message to the Duce. The tone is changed. It is no longer, as it was the first time, in a covertly threatening style. It is rather a discouraged and conciliatory message. He speaks of the Gospel of Christ, but these are arguments that have little effect upon Mussolini, especially to-day, when he is convinced that he has victory in his grasp. It takes more than this to move him.

Great excitement over the news of the piercing of the Maginot Line at Sedan. It is a piece of news that doesn't convince me completely, and I believe that it is dangerous to exaggerate

information of secondary importance. Public opinion has now improved because of German victories, but the real feelings of the people have not changed.

Naturally, in our political circle, one witnesses a headlong rush to enlist in the Fascist Party, pre-dating the admission to emphasize sympathy for the warmongers and for pro-Germans and so forth. It would be laughable if the optimistic bits of news we receive were followed by others less good.

MAY 16, 1940. The news was, in truth, very much exaggerated. The breaching of the Maginot Line became a breakthrough! The proof is that during the evening Sir Percy sent a British report on the operations of a rather optimistic flavour. I show it to the Duce, who is impressed, although his nature compels him to believe only news favourable to his own longings. Nevertheless, during the day he has shown himself to be less anxious to set fire to the powder keg.

The conference that he had with the King has also irritated him. His Majesty still maintains an obstructionist attitude towards intervention, saying that public opinion is overwhelmingly against it. He raised numerous objections on the question of a military command, although he ended by yielding.

Loraine brings a message from Churchill to the Duce. It is a message of good will, couched in vague terms, but none the less dignified and noble. Even Mussolini appreciates the tone of it, and he means to answer that, like Great Britain, he, too, intends to remain true to his word. An increasing uneasiness in the Vatican on account of the daily incidents caused, above all, by interference with the sale of the *Osservatore Romano*. The Nuncio calls attention to these matters in a conversation with me, during which I was able to give him only kind and vague words.

MAY 17, 1940. News from the French front speaks of an overwhelming German advance. Saint Quentin has been taken, and Paris is directly threatened from there. We still lack confirmation from French sources, just as we lack details on the depth of the penetration of the lines. However, all this leads one to believe that it is a very serious situation. Italian public opinion (I mean honest opinion, not the clownish politicians, who have become exaggeratedly pro-German) reacts in a

strange way to this news: admiration for the Germans, a wishful belief in the rapid conclusion of the war, and, above all, a great concern about the future. Mussolini is calm and, at least until now, has shown no desire to hasten intervention.

Von Mackensen proposes an exchange of telegrams between me and von Ribbentrop on the occasion of the anniversary of the Pacts, and speaks of the bestowal of the collar of the Annunziata on Goering; this can be presented by Alfieri. But Marshal Goering insists on a telegram from the King. I fear that the present situation will not allow any alternative. The King must do it.

MAY 18, 1940. News of the conflict is increasingly favourable to the Germans: Brussels fallen, Antwerp demolished, columns of tanks running through France up to Soissons, followed, it seems, by German infantry. However, our military staff is withholding its opinion. General Soddu does not think it is a decisive battle and asks for two weeks more before pronouncing judgment.

I give Sir Percy Loraine the Duce's answer to Churchill. It is brief and needlessly harsh in tone. Loraine receives it without comment. In turn, he gives me his usual information on the military situation, which the English continue to describe in incredibly rosy colours.

François-Poncet is more concerned. He believes that during the last few hours the situation has become better, but he knows that the fate of France is at stake. He is concerned about our attitude and says that he does not "consider that it is to the interest of Italy to see France crushed". He refuses likewise to believe that Mussolini will want to rob Stalin of the glory of striking at a fallen man.

Without saying anything I hand Phillips the brief and dry answer to Roosevelt's message. He receives it without comment. To-morrow I am going to Cremona and Milan. Mussolini orders me to give a definite intimation of our approaching intervention, as well as to indicate clearly that he will also be "the only head" of the nation while at war—the civil as well as military head.

MAY 19, 1940. Cremona. Milan. Very warm welcome in both cities. But in Milan the mention of intervention made

in my brief speech, while received with enthusiasm by the Fascist militiamen, is greeted with limited enthusiasm by the great masses of the people. I gain the impression that Milan, which hates the Germans tenaciously, considers entry into the war, even under present conditions, as an unwelcome necessity.

MAY 20, 1940. I report to the Duce on my Milan visit, and he agrees with my opinion on the situation. To-day he does not speak of intervention. He fully approves the text of the speeches delivered by me yesterday along the line of his suggestions.

Mackensen mentions the possibility of a rapprochement between us and Russia, through the medium of Ribbentrop. I answer that there is no objection on our part, provided the Russians take the initiative by sending back their Ambassador. They started the break and they will have to make the first gesture.

War news continues favourable to the Germans. They have captured General Giraud, together with his General Staff. François-Poncet talked of him a few days ago as the great hope of France, and predicted that he would be Gamelin's successor.

All this makes a great impression on many Italians, even those who are not capable of seeing what is coming. Even Dino Grandi came to see me, and said with a very dramatic air: "We should admit that we were wrong in everything and prepare ourselves for the new times ahead." I did not share his change of heart; not because I am stubborn, but because, in spite of everything, my opinions have not changed. The worth of a horse is tested in a long race, and nobody can imagine how long this race will be.

MAY 21, 1940. The King is nervous. This morning I went to the royal palace to accompany the Albanian mission, which has come to bring the Address in Reply to the Speech of the Crown.<sup>212</sup> The King almost attacked me on the question of the collar of the Annunziata for Goering. He said: "This thing has gone all wrong. To give Goering the collar is a gesture that displeases me, and to send him a telegram is distasteful for

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<sup>212</sup> Speech of the Crown: A formality according to which every time a Speech of the Crown is made in Parliament Heads of the Provinces offer what is called the Address in Reply.

a hundred thousand reasons." On the military situation His Majesty expressed himself as being unfavourable to the Germans.

I talked to the Duce of the necessity of setting our aspirations clearly before the Germans. If we really have to leap headlong into war, we must make a definite deal. Even to-day the war remains for me an adventure with many fearful, unknown factors. I know these fellows too well, and I trust their written agreements very little and their word not at all. After June 1st I might see Ribbentrop and draw up a report on what should be our share at the end of the war.

MAY 22, 1940. I leave for Albania. I arrive at Durazzo and Tirana. A very warm welcome. The Albanians are far on the path of intervention. They want Kossovo and Ciamuria. It is easy for us to increase our popularity by becoming champions of Albanian nationalism.

MAY 23, 1940. I visit Scutari and Rubico. A very promising copper mine. The public works that I visited this morning are also satisfactory. Everywhere a warm welcome.

There is no question but that the mass of the people is now won over by Italy. The Albanian people are grateful to us for having taught them to eat twice a day, for this rarely happened before. Even in the physical appearance of the people greater well-being can be noted.

MAY 24, 1940. I mingled with the workers at Ragosina. Italian labourers mix well with the Albanians. We find the greatest difficulties in the Italian middle classes, who treat the natives badly and who have a colonial mentality. Unfortunately, this is also true of military officers, and, according to Jacomoni, especially of their wives.

MAY 25, 1940. Stopped at Butrinto. Very beautiful. The Canal of Corfu. Port Edda. I returned to Italy.

In Brindisi, at Bari, and at every subsequent station I receive a hearty welcome. The people want to know what will be done, and I hear many voices calling for war. This never happened up to a few days ago.

MAY 26, 1940. I report to the Duce on my journey, which, on the whole, has been satisfactory. Mussolini speaks to me of his disagreement with the King on the question of the military

command during the war. It seems that before yielding to the Duce the King put up considerable resistance.

Hitler has sent another letter to the Duce, and to Alfieri a report on his conference with Goering. The latter raised the question of the date of our intervention and suggested our attacking when, after the liquidation of the Anglo-French-Belgian strongholds, the Germans can throw the whole weight of their power on Paris. The Duce agrees in principle. He plans to write a letter to Hitler announcing our intervention for the latter part of June.

MAY 27, 1940. Long conversations with François-Poncet and with Phillips. The latter was the bearer of a message from Roosevelt for the Duce, but was not received and spoke to me instead. I have made a stenographic report of our interview. In short, Roosevelt offers to become the mediator between us and the Allies, making himself personally responsible for the execution, after the war, of any eventual agreements. I answer Phillips that Roosevelt is off the track. It takes more than that to dissuade Mussolini. In fact, it is not that he wants to obtain this or that; what he wants is war, and, even if he were to obtain by peaceful means double what he claims, he would refuse.

My conference with Poncet is also important, not because of its results, but as a psychological indication. He made some very precise overtures. Exclusive of Corsica, which is "an integral part of France", he said that we can make a deal about Tunisia and perhaps even about Algeria. I answered that he, too, like Phillips, is too late, and reminded him of the time when France, in 1938, objected to our having even those four reefs which England had ceded to us in the Red Sea.<sup>213</sup> Once more the French have been, as Machiavelli says, "more niggardly than prudent".

Poncet recognizes the faults of the French, attacks the governments of the past, and throws a great part of the responsibility upon Leger, whom he calls a "sinister man". The conversation, naturally, was kept on an academic note.

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<sup>213</sup> Reefs in the Red Sea: The Anglo-Italian Agreement of 1938 provided, among other things, for preventing any other powers from acquiring privileges on islands in the Red Sea belonging to the Yemen and Saudi Arabia, or other islands to which Turkey had renounced rights.



MAY 28, 1940. My conference with Poncet, who is the picture of distress, and the events of the night (the Belgian capitulation) led Mussolini to speed up his planning, as he is convinced that things are now coming to a head, and he wants to create enough claims to be entitled to his share of the spoils. This is all very well as regards France. But England is still standing. And America? The Duce talks of June 10th.

I see Christic; he is terrified and would like to know if we shall attack his country. I can but partially reassure him. A painful conference with Sir Percy Loraine. He had come to discuss the question of the blockade and complained about the interruption of the negotiations. I answered that all this was useless because we are on the brink of war. Although prepared for it, he did not expect such a brutal blow and grew pale. Then he recovered his bearings. "If you choose the sword, it will be the sword that will decide the future. It is well to establish this in connection with responsibilities for the war." Then he continued, changing his tone: "We shall answer war with war, but, notwithstanding this, my heart is filled with sadness to think that blood must flow between our countries." I answered that this was very sad for me, too, but that I could not see any other way out.

On the situation in Flanders he expressed himself thus: "If the Allies win, the war will end in a year. If the Germans win, it will last more than three years. But this will not change the end, which will be our victory." He spoke with firmness, but his face was very sad and his eyes at times were dim.

MAY 29, 1940. To-day at eleven at the Palazzo Venezia the High Command was born! Rarely have I seen Mussolini so happy. He has realized his dream: that of becoming the military leader of the country at war. Under him will be Badoglio, Graziani, Pricolo, and Cavagnari. The decision is about to be taken; after June 5th any day may be suitable. I reported to the Duce on my conferences of yesterday, and advised him to give solemn assurances to Yugoslavia as to our neutrality, and especially evidence that we have no interest in setting the match to the Balkan powder keg. After the war is won we can obtain what we want anyway. He authorizes me to act in this way, and therefore I talked to Christic, who,

having been called suddenly, came to my room as pale as a ghost, but he left comforted.

Badoglio now seems to accept a bad game with good grace, and prepares for war. He still tries to gain some days in order to look into the French situation more clearly, because he thinks that there may be some surprises. He is concerned about Libya, where a French move might have a chance of success. However, the war must be brief. Not more than two or three months according to Favagrossa, who is a pessimist, because our supplies are fearfully modest. We are literally without some metals. On the eve of the war—and what a war!—we have only 100 tons of nickel.

MAY 30, 1940. The decision has been taken. The die is cast. To-day Mussolini gave me the communication he has sent to Hitler about our entry into the war. The date chosen is June 5th, unless Hitler himself considers it convenient to postpone it for some days. The message is communicated in cipher to Alfieri at Berlin with orders to deliver it to Hitler personally. At the same time I inform von Mackensen; although he was already prepared, the Ambassador received the news with great joy. He had words of admiration for the Duce and praised my decision to take part in the war as a pilot. "In Germany," he said, "the senior officials of the Party have not set a good example. Baldur von Schirach,<sup>214</sup> at least until now, has been safely tucked away at the rear."

Mussolini plans to make a speech to the people on the afternoon of June 4th. One hour before this I am to announce a state of war to Poncet and Loraine. The Duce wanted to omit "this formality". I insisted on it in order at least to observe the proper forms.

The Egyptian Minister speaks on his own responsibility of an eventual proclamation of neutrality by his Government. I encourage him. I do not believe that Egyptian neutrality would make a great deal of difference in the game, but, nevertheless, it might have a certain advantage.

MAY 31, 1940. Another move by Roosevelt, this time

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<sup>214</sup> Baldur von Schirach: Leader of the Nazi Youth Movement, 1936-40. Reich Gauleiter in Vienna, 1940-43. Captured and charged as major war criminal in October, 1945.

more energetic. After having reminded us of the traditional interest of his country in the Mediterranean, he affirms that Italy's intervention in the war would bring about an increase in armaments by the United States and a multiplying of help in raw materials and war supplies to the Allies. I reserve my answer until I have conferred with Mussolini, but tell Phillips off-hand that Roosevelt's new attempt will suffer the fate of his preceding attempts and will not move the Duce.

Alfieri telephones that he has transmitted the message to Hitler, who was "glad, in fact enthusiastic", and has reserved the right of letting us know, after having conferred with his generals, whether the date chosen is satisfactory. I submit to the Duce the draft of a communiqué for the declaration of war. He approves of it but advises my talking to the King about it, since the latter is sensitive, and, besides, according to the constitution, it is his responsibility to declare war. Daladier delivers a note to Guariglia, the Italian Ambassador in Paris. No definite proposal, but many openings. It states clearly that every attempt will be made to avoid war, but Mussolini refuses to take it into consideration; in fact, he decides that he will not even answer it.

JUNE 1, 1940. An audience with the King. He approves the formula that I submit to him. He is now resigned, even more than resigned, to the idea of war. He believes that France and Great Britain have indeed taken tremendously hard blows, but, with good reason, he attributes great importance to the eventual intervention of the United States. He feels that the country is going to war without enthusiasm. There is interventionist propaganda, but there is no sign of that enthusiasm we had in 1915. "Those who talk of a short and easy war are fools. There are still many unknown factors, and the horizon is very different from that of May 1915." Thus concludes the King.

Christic reports Belgrade's satisfaction at the communication of the other day, and gives the fullest assurances of complete and almost benevolent neutrality.

I gave Phillips the Duce's answer. Briefly, it is as follows: America has no more business in the Mediterranean than Italy has in the Caribbean Sea. Therefore, it is beside the point for

Roosevelt to insist; in fact, he should remember that his insistence can only stiffen Mussolini's determination.

Mackensen brings Hitler's written reply to the Duce. The news of our intervention is received by the Chancellor with enthusiasm. He asks, however, that the date be changed by a few days, for he proposes to make a decisive attack on French airfields. He fears that the beginning of Italian action might cause a reshuffling of French air dispositions, thereby interfering with his plan of destruction. In principle the Duce agrees, because the postponement is useful to complete our preparations in Libya. He prefers the 11th to the 8th, as the former is "a date of good omen for him".

Poncet speaks to me about Daladier's note. From my answers he understands that there is no longer ground for nourishing hopes and illusions. Mussolini's choice will be imposed by the sword. Poncet does not insist on a reply. In fact, if the reply is to be in any way quarrelsome, better to have none at all, because, in any event, "there will always be a future, and we must not think that contacts between France and Italy will no longer be necessary after the war". He says nothing about the situation. He believes that the game is not ended, and that the two great battles that Hitler must fight—the battle of Paris and above all the battle of London—may still bring many surprises.

Bottai, who is one of the few who has not lost his head, proposed on the golf course to-day that in the face of so much official interventionism we form a new party: the "Party of the Interventionists in Bad Faith".

JUNE 2, 1940. The Duce writes his answer to Hitler. While the postponement is advisable, especially to complete military preparations in Libya, Mussolini, who had already set June 5th as the day, is annoyed at having to change it. He selects June 11th.

During the evening Mackensen urgently asks for an interview and, in the name of Hitler, withdraws the reservations made in the previous communication; in fact, it seems that now an earlier intervention would be most welcome. This is not possible. We have moved several divisions, and a declaration of war before June 11th would catch us during the movement.

June 11th is confirmed as the definite date; it is sufficient that Hitler answer "go ahead". Having taken this decision, Mussolini becomes, as always after a decision, calm and sure.

In the evening I saw Balbo for a long talk. He is preparing to return to Libya. He has made up his mind to do the best he can, but he does not believe that the war will be quick and easy. The forces at his disposal are only sufficient for a short conflict. What if the war should be long? At any rate, he is a soldier, and he will fight with energy and determination. Naturally, he doesn't withdraw even one of his objections to the Axis policy. Balbo does not discuss the Germans. He hates them. And it is this incurable hatred which guides his reasoning.

JUNE 3, 1940. Alfieri telegraphs the "go ahead" from Hitler. In reality the bombardment of Paris and of other French airfields proves that Hitler has already started to move.

Mussolini says that the King, too, finds the 11th satisfactory, perhaps because of the slight delay that will be granted to us, because it is his birthday, and because as a raw recruit he was given the number 1,111. Now that the sword is about to be unsheathed, the King, like all members of the House of Savoy, is preparing to be a soldier, and only a soldier.

Percy Loraine comes to see me on the pretext of small current affairs. We already talk as representatives of two countries in conflict, even though our own personal relations are excellent. He is sad but calm. He realizes that the next two or three months will be extremely critical for the Allies. But if they can hold out, Germany is lost. He would like to participate personally in the war. I answer that I have no desire to discuss the matter. Now that my country is in the war, or will be soon, I do not want to discuss his conjectures, nor can I tolerate such a discussion.

JUNE 4, 1940. A meeting of the Council of Ministers. While all were expecting great political sensations, the Duce coquettishly gave to-day's meeting "a strictly administrative character, such as it has never had in eighteen years". No declaration. Only at the beginning of the meeting Mussolini said: "This is the last Council of Ministers during peace-time", and took up the agenda.

I have chosen my military position in the war. I assume command of a squadron of bombing planes at Pisa. I have chosen this field because it is closest to Corsica, and because it is dear to me to fight where I was born and where my father sleeps his last sleep. The Duce approved my decision to join up as well as that of leaving Rome for Pisa, because he prefers that I become "a soldier-Minister" rather than a "Minister-soldier".

JUNE 5, 1940. The Germans have attacked on the line of the Somme. For the present, information is lacking, but it is everybody's conviction that they will cross it rapidly. French morale has not yet improved, and the defensive organization is necessarily incomplete. Have we come to the decisive battle?

So far as we are concerned, nothing has changed in the programme. Only this, that the Duce, though he had previously been thinking of launching an air attack against France as a beginning, has now decided to bombard British ports in the Mediterranean and to remain as an observer toward France, unless, he concluded, "before Monday they [the French] have been subjected to a new attack by the Germans and our action against them will serve to finish the work".

JUNE 6, 1940. I find the Duce angry with the King over the question of the supreme command. He had hoped that the King would yield it without difficulty. Instead, His Majesty has written a letter in which he repeats that he assumes the command, at the same time entrusting to Mussolini the political and military conduct of the war. Mussolini finds this "an ambiguous formula whereby he is given what he has virtually had for eighteen years". A great disappointment for the Duce, who plans to write to the King that it is better to leave things where they are, and he adds: "After the war is over I shall tell Hitler to do away with all of these absurd anachronisms in the form of monarchies."

Little news about the battle of the Somme. The Germans are gaining ground, but a real break-through does not seem to have occurred. The French, now that they are on their own soil, fight with their traditional bravery, even if their hopes have largely vanished. The reshuffling of the Reynaud Cabinet has been interpreted as a sign of political collapse.

JUNE 7, 1940. Nothing new in Italy. On the French

front the struggle continues to be very hard. Although the French have had to retreat in a number of places, there are yet no signs of an actual break-through. The public is following the events of this battle with unprecedented anxiety. It knows that on the Somme decisive cards are being played for the history of the world.

An almost good-bye visit from Percy Loraine. He is sad and feels fully the gravity of the hour for his country, but talks with imperturbable firmness about a fight to the last, confirming his faith in victory "because the British are not in the habit of being beaten". He is personally worried about his journey home, but I have taken every precaution to ensure him and his staff perfect treatment. He is also worried about a colt he has to leave in Italy.

JUNE 8, 1940. The battle continues. New German successes, but still one cannot speak of a break-through at the front. French resistance is becoming tenacious, stubborn, heroic. Mussolini reads me the speech he will make on Monday, at 6 p.m., when the nation is to be called to listen. It is an appeal to the people in Mussolini's best classical style in which he briefly outlines the reasons for our intervention.

The Duce is following the battle in progress with anxiety, and is happy over the resistance of the French because "the Germans are finally being weakened and will not reach the end of the war too fresh and too strong". The arrangement is concluded for Rosso's return to Moscow as Ambassador and for the Soviet Ambassador to Rome. Ribbentrop will be happy over this, since it was one of the great objectives of his policy. Still, there is something not entirely clear in the conduct of the Kremlin toward Germany.

JUNE 9, 1940. A rapid German advance seems to be deciding the fate of the battle irrevocably. In Badoglio's judgment, the battle will still be long and hard, especially because of the terrain.

The Duce was angry this morning at the Germans, because, from an intercepted telephone call, he learned that Ribbentrop had the cheek to ask for the text of Mussolini's speech. "He is the same presumptuous boor," said the Duce. "I am not his servant, and I do not intend to be."

Poncet comes to say good-bye. He is sad and depressed, and at this stage admits that his country is beaten. He personally would accept a separate peace, but he does not know his Government's intentions. A separate peace would probably be the lesser of two evils. The continuation of the war will be a frightful destruction of civilization, of riches, of life. Poncet wept, but he affirmed that France wishes to save at least its military honour in a hopeless struggle, three against one, five against one. We said good-bye with emotion that neither of us was able to conceal. Poncet is a man like us; he is a Latin.

Mackensen brings the Duce a message received from Hitler by air. His best wishes for our coming entry into the war. He accepts the offer of the Bersaglieri, and will send, in exchange, some regiments of his Alpine troops. He describes with sober optimism the various phases of the battle of France.

JUNE 10, 1940. Declaration of war. First I received Poncet, who tried not to betray his emotion. I told him: "You probably understood the reason for your being called." He answered, with a fleeting smile: "Although I am not very intelligent, I have understood this time." After having listened to the declaration of war, he replied: "It is a dagger-blow at a man who has already fallen. I thank you none the less for using the velvet glove," he continued, saying that he had foreseen all this for two years, and that he had no longer hoped that he could avoid it after the signing of the Pact of Steel. He was not able to resign himself to considering me an enemy, nor could he so consider any Italian. However, as for the future, it was necessary to find some formula for European life, and he hoped that an unbridgeable chasm would not be created between Italy and France. "The Germans are hard masters. You, too, will learn this." I did not answer. This did not seem to me the time for discussion. "Don't get yourself killed," he concluded, pointing to my aviator's uniform, and he clasped my hand.

Sir Percy Loraine was more laconic and inscrutable. He received my communication without batting an eyelid or changing colour. He confined himself to writing down the exact formula used by me and asked me if he was to consider it as advance information or as a general declaration of war. Learning that it was the latter, he withdrew with dignity and



courtesy. At the door we exchanged a long and cordial handshake.

Mussolini speaks from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia. The news of the war does not surprise anyone and does not arouse very much enthusiasm. I am sad, very sad. The adventure begins. May God help Italy!

## SECTION IV

June 11, 1940—June 22, 1941

### *FLUCTUATING HOPES*

FALL of Reynaud—Frénch ask for armistice—Mussolini and Ciano go to Munich to discuss armistice terms—Italian-French armistice signed—Death of Balbo—Mussolini offers to send planes to help the German attack on England—Anglo-French naval engagement at Oran—Greece gives assurances of neutrality—Ciano visits Berlin to confer with Hitler, who decides against Italian help in the invasion—Italy's air losses—Offensive in Libya postponed—Mussolini's plan to attack Greece is not welcomed in Berlin—Franco informs Mussolini that Spain may enter the war—Ciano visits Hitler at Berchtesgaden—Meeting at Vienna of German, Hungarian and Italian Foreign Ministers—America lends destroyers to Britain—Abdication of Carol of Rumania—Mussolini prophesies war between Russia and the Axis—Italian attack in Libya begins—British withdrawal—Germany to sign a military alliance with Japan—Ciano visits Berlin for signing of Tripartite Pact—Hitler and Mussolini meet at the Brenner Pass—Attack on Greece begins—Death of Neville Chamberlain—British attack Italian fleet at Taranto—Rumanian delegation visits Rome—Hungary adheres to the Tripartite Pact—Ciano discusses the Yugoslav situation with Hitler—Badoglio resigns as Chief of Staff—Allied attack on Sidi Barrani—Italian reverses in Greece—General Soddu replaced—British capture Bardia—Mussolini decides to mobilise all high Fascist officials—Fall of Tobruk—Ciano joins his air group at Bari—He visits Ljubljana to confer with Pavelic—Crown of Croatia offered to the Duke of Spoleto—King Victor Emmanuel visits Albania—Hess flies to England—Sinking of *Bismarck*—A further meeting at the Brenner Pass—Croatia adheres to the Tripartite Pact—Germany invades Russia.

JUNE 11, 1940. A meeting of the Council of Ministers. Some war measures relating to finance and justice are rapidly adopted. The Duce wants our legislation to conform to that of the Germans.

I leave by plane for Pisa, where I assume command of a group of bombers assigned to me. The first day of war passes very peacefully on this happy yet rugged coast of Antiguano.

JUNE 12, 1940. Nothing new.

JUNE 13, 1940

JUNE 13, 1940. Nothing new.

JUNE 14, 1940. Nothing new.

JUNE 15, 1940. I fly as far as Nice in order to look for the French ships which have bombarded Genoa. Very bad weather; dangerous flying. I return after two hours without having sighted the enemy.

JUNE 16, 1940. Bombing of Calvi.

JUNE 17, 1940. Bombing of Borgo, airport of Bastia. Accurate aiming. French reaction is also active and accurate. On my return to the landing-field it is reported to me that Reynaud has fallen and that Pétain has taken his place. This means peace. In fact, Anfuso telephones me to return at once to Rome in order to leave for Munich that evening. The French have asked for an armistice, and Hitler, before dictating his terms, wants to confer with the Duce.

I find Mussolini dissatisfied. This sudden peace disquiets him. During the trip we speak at length in order to clarify conditions under which the armistice is to be granted to the French. The Duce is an extremist. He would like to go so far as the total occupation of French territory and demands the surrender of the French fleet. But he is aware that his opinion has only a consultative value. The war has been won by Hitler without any active military participation on the part of Italy, and it is Hitler who will have the last word. This, naturally, disturbs and saddens him. His reflections on the Italian people and, above all, on our armed forces are extremely bitter this evening.

JUNE 18 and 19, 1940. During the rail journey the German welcome is very warm. At Munich a meeting with Hitler and von Ribbentrop. The Duce and the Führer are locked in conference. Von Ribbentrop exceptionally moderate and calm, and in favour of peace. He says at once that we must offer lenient armistice terms to France, especially concerning the fleet; this is to avoid the French fleet joining with the English fleet. From von Ribbentrop's words I feel that the mood has changed also as regards England. If London wants war it will be a total war, complete, pitiless. But Hitler makes many reservations on the desirability of demolishing the British Empire, which he considers, even to-day, to be an important

factor in world equilibrium. I ask von Ribbentrop a clear-cut question: "Do you prefer the continuation of the war, or peace?" He does not hesitate a moment. "Peace." He also alludes to vague contacts between London and Berlin by means of Sweden. I speak of our desiderata with respect to France. In general I find him understanding, but von Ribbentrop does not want to push the conversation further because he does not know as yet Hitler's precise ideas. He says only that there is a German project to round up and send the Jews to Madagascar.

The conference then continued with Hitler, Mussolini, and the military authorities. In principle the terms of the armistice with France are fixed. Mussolini shows himself to be quite intransigent on the matter of the fleet.

Hitler, on the other hand, wants to avoid an uprising of the French Navy in favour of the British. From all that he says it is clear that he wants to act quickly to end it. Hitler is now the gambler who has made a big scoop and would like to get up from the table risking nothing more. To-day he speaks with a reserve and a perspicacity which, after such a victory, are really astonishing. I cannot be accused of excessive tenderness towards him, but to-day I truly admire him.

Mussolini is very much embarrassed. He feels that his role is secondary. He reports on his conference with Hitler, not without a tone of bitterness and irony, and he concludes by saying that the German people have, in themselves, the germs of a collapse because a formidable internal clash will come that will smash everything. In truth, the Duce fears that the hour of peace is growing near and sees that unattainable dream of his life, glory on the field of battle, fading once again.

JUNE 20, 1940. The French have appointed the same delegates to deal with us who were appointed to deal with Germany, and they ask whether negotiations can take place contemporaneously at the same place. This was also our idea at Munich. But Hitler was opposed to it, and specifically asked for "two commissions". The Duce thinks that he sees a psychological explanation of this—namely that Hitler did not want the French to face Italians and Germans in a position of parity.

Mussolini decided yesterday to attack the French in the Alps.

Badoglio was energetically opposed, but the Duce insisted. Then I spoke to him. I consider it rather inglorious to fall upon a defeated army, and I find it morally dangerous also. Armistice is at the door, and if our Army should not overcome resistance during the first assault, our campaign would end with a howling failure. Mussolini listened to me, and it seems that he will limit the attack to a small sector near the Swiss frontier. He was persuaded to do this also by a telephonic interception of a conversation between Generals Roatta and Pintor, in which the latter declared that he is absolutely unprepared to carry out an attack to-morrow. This happens after nine months of waiting, and with the French reduced as they are! Had we entered the war in September what would have happened? Mussolini is very indignant with Balbo, who in Cyrenaica has met with a series of failures already, notwithstanding a great quantity of men and supplies at his disposal.

JUNE 21, 1940. Alfieri transmits the German armistice terms. I examine them with the Duce and Badoglio. They are moderate terms which prove Hitler's desire to arrive at an understanding quickly. Under these conditions Mussolini does not feel inclined to advance claims to territorial occupation. This might provoke a rupture in the negotiations and bring about a real rift in our relations with Berlin. Hence, he will confine himself to asking for the militarization of a fifty-kilometre strip of the frontier and plans to advance our claims at the moment of peace. Mussolini is very humiliated because our troops have not made a step forward. Even to-day they have not succeeded in advancing and have halted in front of the first French fortification which put up some opposition.

In Libya an Italian general has allowed himself to be taken prisoner. Mussolini is taking it out on the Italian people: "It is the material that I lack. Even Michelangelo had need of marble to make statues. If he had had only clay he would have been nothing more than a potter. A people who for sixteen centuries have been an anvil cannot become a hammer within a few years."

Hitler's ceremonial for the signing of the armistice has also disturbed the Duce very much. It explains why the Germans did not want a single commission.

JUNE 22, 1940. We are waiting for the French delegates. There is a little delay because of some discussions, but Alfieri telephoned that the signing will surely take place. The delegates, it seems, will come to-morrow. Mussolini would like to delay as much as possible, in the hope that General Gambara, who in the meantime has attacked, will arrive at Nice. It would be a good thing, but will we have time? I received the Soviet Ambassador. The conversation was cordial but general. I say that Italo-Russian relations are, above all, a psychological fact, because there are no conflicts of direct interest that separate the two countries. The Ambassador addresses some questions to me about the Balkans. I say that, in principle, our policy in that sector is to preserve the status quo.

Preparations are made for the ceremony of the armistice. The Duce desires that since there has been no struggle there should not be the least theatrical display. The meeting will take place almost secretly and the press will be asked to give it no publicity.

JUNE 23, 1940. The French plenipotentiaries have arrived in German planes. They are received by us at 7.30 p.m. at Villa Incisa on the Cassia Road. Badoglio does not hide his emotion. He wants to treat them with great courtesy. Among the French delegates is Parisot,<sup>215</sup> who is a personal friend of his. Who knows how many times they have spoken ill together of the Germans? In the dining-room, on the ground floor, there is a long table, and we sit down at one end. I have Badoglio at my right and Admiral Cavagnari at my left. We wait for the French standing, and we greet them with the Roman salute. They answer with a nod of the head. They are dignified. They do not show any pride nor, on the other hand, do they show any humiliation. Only Noel<sup>216</sup> is as white as a sheet. They sit down. I stand up and say that Badoglio has charge of communicating the armistice terms. Roatta reads the French translation of them. Huntziger answers that although he is a plenipotentiary, nevertheless, as they are dealing with questions that involve the future of his country, he must report to Bordeaux;

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<sup>215</sup> General Parisot: Member of the French delegation to sign the armistice with Italy.

<sup>216</sup> Leon Noel: French Ambassador to Poland, 1935-40. Member of the commissions to sign armistices with Italy and Germany.

therefore he asks that the meeting be postponed until tomorrow. I approve, and fix the meeting for 10 a.m. Before leaving I shake hands with Huntziger, who was not expecting it. Then I say good-bye to all the French delegates, followed by Badoglio and the others. The ceremony lasted twenty-five minutes in all.

From the Palazzo Chigi I report to the Duce by telephone; he is bitter because he had wanted to reach the armistice after a victory by our own armed forces.

JUNE 24, 1940. Badoglio has asked to be left alone to continue negotiations. My presence would have given the appearance of a control which Keitel, at Compiègne, did not have. No opposition on my part, particularly because from telephone interceptions I saw that they were in agreement at Bordeaux. The armistice was signed at 7.15 p.m. and at 7.35 p.m. I sent word to von Mackensen. Within six hours there will be no more fighting in France unless . . . I do not want to make any predictions, but I am not altogether certain that the Pétain government can succeed in imposing its will, especially on the Empire and on the Navy.

To-day at Constantinople all the French merchant ships raised the Union Jack. The war is not yet over, rather it is beginning now. We are going to have more than enough surprises.

Russia is preparing to attack Rumania. This is what Molotov has told Schulenburg.<sup>217</sup> Germany can do no more than acquiesce, but it is clear that Russian policy is increasingly anti-German. The capital in which there is the greatest amount of conspiracy against a German victory is Moscow. The situation appeared quite otherwise when, in August and September, the Bolsheviks signed pacts with the Nazis. At that time they didn't believe in a German triumph. They wanted to push Germany into a conflict and Europe into a crisis because they were thinking of a long and exhausting struggle between the democracies and Hitler. Things have moved fast, and now Moscow is trying to trouble the waters.

JUNE 25, 1940. They do not know the armistice terms in

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<sup>217</sup> Frederic Werner, Graf von de Schulenberg: German Ambassador to Russia, recalled in September, 1940.

Italy as yet, but already rumours are circulating which create a noticeable uneasiness. They were expecting immediate and gratuitous occupation. They thought that all the territory not conquered by force of arms would pass over to us anyway, in view of the agreement. When the document is made public, disillusionment will increase all the more.

Starace, returning from the front, says that the attack on the Alps has proved the total lack of preparation of our Army, an absolute lack of offensive weapons, and complete lack of ability in the higher officers. Men were sent to a useless death two days before the armistice, the same technique being employed as more than twenty years ago. If the war in Libya and Ethiopia is conducted in the same way, the future is going to hold many bitter disappointments for us.

I have solicited and obtained German intervention to save the life of Stoyadinovich, who, according to indications from our representative, is in the hands of his enemies and running grave risks.

JUNE 26, 1940. After a communication from von Mackensen I have taken steps to discuss with the Soviet Ambassador the question of Bessarabia. In short, Italy has no objection to the liquidation of this problem, but would prefer, in view of the present state of affairs, to see the controversy settled peacefully and without creating a new conflagration in the Balkans.

JUNE 27, 1940. It is the anniversary of Father's death. I go to Leghorn for the occasion. My sorrow is not so bitter as it was at the time of his death, but even now the wound caused by his disappearance is painfully open in my heart. My dear, great, and good father, you, who have given me not only my life but also whatever I have found beautiful in it, know that I am always near you and that your spirit is my light and guide at all times.

JUNE 28, 1940. Russian ultimatum to Rumania. From Bucharest they ask us directly what they must do. Yield, is our answer. We must at any cost avoid a conflict in the Balkans which would deprive us of their economic resources. For our part, we shall keep Hungary and Bulgaria from joining the conflict.



In fact, Rumania yields, rather sadly, but also with a rapidity worthy of Rumanian traditions as a belligerent people. I see many diplomatic representatives and give them all the Italian point of view.

The Pope intends to take the initiative for peace. I talk about it over the telephone with the Duce, who is immediately and decisively hostile.

Admiral Cavagnari complains of the High Command. There is disorder, and no one assumes responsibility. We have lost eight submarines.

JUNE 29, 1940. Balbo is dead. A tragic mistake has brought his end. The anti-aircraft battery at Tobruk fired on his plane, mistaking it for an English plane, and brought it to the ground. The news saddened me very much. Balbo did not deserve this end. He was exuberant, restless, he loved life in all its manifestations. He had more dash than talent, more vivacity than acumen. He was a decent fellow, and even in political clashes, in which his partisan temperament delighted, he never descended to dishonourable and questionable expedients. He did not desire war and opposed it to the last. But once it had been decided, he spoke with me in the language of a faithful soldier, and, if fate had not been against him, he was preparing to act with decision and daring.

Balbo's memory will linger long among Italians because he was, above all, a true Italian, with the great faults and great virtues of our race.

JUNE 30, 1940. Alfieri telephones that Hitler is going through one of his periods of isolation, which, with him, precede the making of great decisions. Therefore, he has not yet answered the Duce's message, in which he offered the participation of our land and air forces in the attack on Great Britain. But does he really want our aid? From information sent by Teucci, it seems that the German offensive will come only from the air, in grand style, and will take place between July 10th and 15th.

The Duce continues his visit to the Western Front. This trip of his, at the same time that Hitler is visiting Paris, is arousing unfavourable comment. Had I been able, I should have advised him against it.

JULY 1, 1940. Alfieri has gone to confer with Hitler and will also bring up the subject of my approaching visit to Germany.

Nothing more that is new.

JULY 2, 1940. Mussolini has returned from the Western Front, and, as I foresaw, returned enthusiastic over what he had seen. He finds that Italian forces are in good shape. He speaks with fervour of the break-through of the Alpine Maginot Line. As a matter of fact, there has been no break-through. Our storm troops infiltrated inside the French system of fortification and occupied towns in the valleys, while the French forts cut off their lines of retreat. On all this the curtain of the armistice has providentially fallen. Otherwise, there might have been many not altogether joyful happenings. Now Mussolini considers the march on Alexandria as practically completed. He says that Badoglio also considers the undertaking easy and safe.

Alfieri has reported on his conference with Hitler. I am convinced that there is something brewing in that fellow's mind, and that certainly no new decision has yet been taken. There is no longer that impressive tone of assurance which was apparent when Hitler spoke of breaking through the Maginot Line. Now he is considering many alternatives, and is raising doubts which account for his restlessness. Meanwhile, he does not answer Mussolini's offer to send men and planes to participate in an attack on England. On the other hand, he offers us aerial assistance to bomb the Suez Canal. Evidently he does not place much trust in us.

JULY 3, 1940. I ask Phillips the meaning of the Republican presidential candidacy, and if the United States is ready to enter the war. He replies: "In the field of foreign policy, Democrats and Republicans are almost entirely in agreement. For the moment we don't intend to enter the conflict. We are arming on a very large scale, and are helping the British in every way. However, some new fact might decide our intervention, such as a bombardment of London with many victims among the civilian population." This is why Hitler is careful and thinks twice before launching the final adventure. So much the more so, because, as we gather from many quarters, the Russians

are preparing to assume a more and more hostile attitude towards the Axis.

I spoke clearly to the Greek Minister. De Vecchi telegraphs that British ships and maybe also British planes find refuge, supplies, and protection in Greece. Mussolini is furious. If this music should continue he has decided to take action against Greece. The Greek Minister tried weakly to deny it, but he left with his tail between his legs.

Limited firing between the French and British fleets at Oran. We still have no particulars, but it is a matter of no small moment.

This Sunday I shall be in Berlin and perhaps Hitler will speak. Will it be a speech of peace or one of total war against Great Britain?

JULY 4, 1940. News of the Anglo-French naval engagement is still indefinite. In any case, a good part of the French fleet has been destroyed, and perhaps another part has been seized. This disturbs Admiral Cavagnari, who this morning confirmed the fact that we had lost ten submarines. It is too early to judge the consequences of the British action. For the moment it proves that the fighting spirit of His Britannic Majesty's fleet is quite alive, and still has the aggressive ruthlessness of the captains and pirates of the seventeenth century.

Bastianini, who is back from London, says that the morale of the British is very high and that they have no doubts about victory, even though it may come only after a long time. Everybody—aristocracy, middle class, and the common people—is embittered, tenacious, and proud. Air and anti-aircraft preparation has been undertaken on a large scale, and is sufficient to repulse and greatly reduce the enemy offensive. Hitler's indecision is thus explained.

Mussolini is worried over the possibility that the Germans may have got hold of certain documents among those that they captured from the French which might compromise us. So far as the Duce is concerned this isn't possible; they must be forgeries. For myself . . . I could not say the same! But the Germans know very well what I think, and have no need of any confirmation of my views by any French papers.

The Ambassador confirms next Sunday for my visit to Berlin.

JULY 5, 1940. The Duce gives me instructions for my visit to Germany. He wants definitely to participate in the attack on Great Britain, if it occurs, and he is concerned over the fact that France is trying to slip gradually into the anti-British camp. He fears that this may cause us to be defrauded of our booty. He charges me also to tell Hitler that he intends to land on the Ionian Islands and to tell him about the necessity of splitting up Yugoslavia, a typical Versailles creation, which functions against us. Through her Minister, Greece gives assurances of total neutrality which the Duce receives incredulously, especially since De Vecchi maintains his accusations against Greece.

JULY 6, 1940. On my way to Berlin.

JULY 7, 1940. I arrive in Berlin. Warm reception. Conference with Hitler, of which there is a stenographic report elsewhere. I can add, personally, that he was very kind, extremely so. He is rather inclined to continue the struggle and to unleash a storm of wrath and of steel upon the British. But the final decision has not been reached, and it is for this reason that he is delaying his speech, of which, as he himself puts it, he wants to weigh every word. As to his health—he is well. He is calm and reserved, very reserved for a German who has won.

Von Ribbentrop, too, has changed, in contrast to his attitude at Munich. Then he merely reflected the warlike spirit of his master. To-day he is buoyantly belligerent.

JULY 8, 1940. A visit to the front: the Maginot Line, Metz, Verdun. The struggle has been less hard than I had believed it to be from a distance; apart from a row of villages between the frontier and the Maginot Line, there are no traces of war.

JULY 9, 1940. Still at the front: Lille, Dunkerque, Ostend, Bruges, Flanders. Here, too, many signs of flight and very few of fighting.

JULY 10, 1940. Munich. Meeting with the Hungarians at Hitler's residence. The latter clearly analyses the situation in regard to the restless Magyars. If they are certain that they can do it alone, and if they are sure they cannot expect any aid from Italy and Germany, who are involved elsewhere, let them attack. The Magyars left dissatisfied.

Salzburg. Great popular demonstration.

JULY 11, 1940. Report to the Duce on my visit. He is satisfied with the results. Von Ribbentrop spoke in clear terms about the Italian desiderata. Mussolini is good-humoured, satisfied with the results of an aero-naval engagement, and optimistic about the approaching action in Egypt.

Von Ribbentrop telephones in a gruff and rude manner concerning some articles in our newspapers which have unmasked the Axis batteries as regards German intentions in the Balkans. He exaggerates. I know how to answer him, but for the time being mum's the word.

JULY 12, 1940. Nothing worth recording.

JULY 13, 1940. The real controversy in the matter of naval armament is not between us and the British, but between our Air Force and our Navy. Admiral Cavagnari maintains that our air action was completely lacking during the first phase of the encounter, but that when it finally came it was directed against our own ships, which for six hours withstood the bombardment of our aeroplanes. Other information also gives the lie to the glowing reports of our Air Force. I confess that I am incredulous too. Mussolini, on the other hand, is not. To-day he said that within three days the Italian Navy has annihilated 50 per cent of the British naval potential in the Mediterranean. Perhaps this is somewhat exaggerated.

We are awaiting a speech from Hitler. We shall learn the decisions from him.

JULY 14, 1940. Helfand, who directed the Soviet Embassy at Rome for many months, has to return to Moscow, but he sniffs the odour of the firing-squad. That is why he has asked for help to escape to America, where he will leave his family, and, I believe, stay himself. He is a keen and intelligent man, whose long contact with bourgeois civilization has made a complete bourgeois of him. Under the stress of imminent misfortune all his Jewish blood has come to the surface. He has become extremely obliging and does nothing but bow and scrape. But he wishes to save his family; he adores his daughter. He fears their deportation more than death for himself. This is very human and very beautiful.

JULY 15, 1940. Alfieri telephones that the date of Hitler's speech is not yet decided.

The outline of the letter that the Führer intends to send to King Carol on the Transylvanian question arrives. The Duce approves it.

JULY 16, 1940. Hitler has sent a long letter to the Duce. It announces the attack against England as something decided upon, but declines in a definite and courteous way the offer to send an Italian expeditionary force. He explains his refusal by saying that logistic difficulties would arise in supplying two armies. Goering, too, in a conversation with Alfieri, said that Italian aviation has too important a task in the Mediterranean to scatter its forces in other sectors. The Duce was very much annoyed by the refusal, but he finds solace in instructing the press to play up the naval battle of a week ago. But we have received information, even from German sources, that the damage inflicted on the British Navy is about nil. The Italian Navy is also of this opinion, while the Italian Air Force tends to exaggerate. I only hope that the version given by the Air Force is true, otherwise it will cost us dignity and prestige even with the Germans.

I took measures to give full help to the Italians in France. It is really humiliating to learn that they are forced to beg the defeated French for alms.

JULY 17, 1940. Nothing new.

JULY 18, 1940. The Germans inform us at the last moment that Hitler's speech will be made to-morrow at 7 p.m. I must leave at once.

JULY 19, 1940. I arrive in Berlin. Conference with von Ribbentrop. Hitler's speech will be a last appeal to Great Britain. I understand that, without their saying so, however, they are hoping and praying that this appeal will not be rejected.

Ceremony at the Reichstag. It is solemn and theatrical. Hitler speaks simply and, I should say also, in an unusually humane tone. I believe that his desire for peace is sincere. In fact, late in the evening, when the first cold British reactions to the speech arrive, a sense of ill-concealed disappointment spreads among the Germans.

JULY 20, 1940. Conference with the Führer, a stenographic report of which is to be found elsewhere. He confirms

my impressions of yesterday. He would like an understanding with Great Britain. He knows that war with the British will be hard and bloody, and knows also that people everywhere to-day are averse to bloodshed.

In the afternoon a visit to Goering. He looked feverish, but as he dangled the collar of the Annunziata from his neck he was somewhat rude and haughty toward me. I was more interested in the luxurious decoration of his house than in him and his variable humours. It is an ever-increasing show of luxury, and it is truly incomprehensible how, in a country which is socialistic, or almost so, people can tolerate the extraordinary pomp displayed by this Western satrap.

JULY 21, 1940. Return journey.

JULY 22, 1940. I report my impressions to the Duce. He, who had been against Hitler's speaking, describes it as "a much too cunning speech". He fears that the English may find in it a pretext to begin negotiations. That would be sad for Mussolini, because now more than ever he wants war. And yet to-day he was depressed on account of the loss of *Colleoni*, not so much because of the sinking itself as because he feels the Italians did not fight very brilliantly.

Halifax makes an inconsequential speech about Germany, in which Hitler's vague proposals for peace are not taken into account.

JULY 23, 1940. The Rumanian Ministers go to confer with the Germans at Salzburg, then they will come to us.

JULY 24, 1940. Nothing new.

JULY 25, 1940. In Florence, to visit Marzio<sup>218</sup>, who has been ill for some days. I am glad to find him lively and gay, as he always has been.

JULY 26, 1940. Our air losses during the first month of the war amount to two hundred and fifty planes; we are producing the same amount. The question of pilots is more difficult. Their losses cannot be easily replaced.

I saw von Mackensen. The usual quarrel between Ribbentrop and Goebbels brings him to me. I do my best to eliminate every pretext for dragging us into this quarrel.

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<sup>218</sup> Marzio Ciano: Ciano's eldest son.

The Hungarians are nervous about the Rumanians' visit to Rome and to Berlin. They fear that Rumania, after so many years of boosting the Little Entente and "Genevaism", might ask and obtain admission to the Axis.

JULY 27, 1940. After a long interval the Duce talks with the King. He saw him yesterday, and His Majesty's first question was "whether we shouldn't fear that Prussia might soon play a trick on Italy also". This question irritated the Duce because "it revealed that nothing has changed in the King's attitude, who at heart still hopes for a British victory—a victory, that is, of the country where he has always kept his immense fortune".

I received the Rumanians. They are simply disgusting. They open their mouths only to exude honeyed compliments. They have become anti-French, anti-British, and anti-League of Nations. They talk with contempt of the diktat of Versailles—too honeyed. I have a first meeting with them at the Palazzo Chigi and I recall to their memory, with a certain brutality, their anti-Italian past. In the afternoon another meeting at the Palazzo Venezia. Mussolini, who had received the report of the German conversations with the Rumanians in time, repeated what Hitler said at Salzburg.

JULY 28, 1940. Sunday, I went to Leghorn with the children.

JULY 29, 1940. Mussolini telephones many times from Riccione instructing me to modify the minutes of Saturday's conversation. He wants me to delete certain anti-Russian phrases of his and substitute for them some rather pro-Soviet remarks. The reports are to go to Berlin!

General Favagrossa brings me up to date on the problem of our supplies. It isn't so bad as we had thought. Our greatest need is for copper and steel alloys.

JULY 30, 1940. From Berlin comes news of absolute calm. Is it the calm before the storm? So affirms Alfieri.

I inform the Hungarians about the conference of last Saturday. Villani is on the whole satisfied.

JULY 31, 1940. Nothing new.

AUGUST 1, 1940. Nothing new.

AUGUST 2, 1940. Nothing new.

AUGUST 3, 1940. I ask the Greek Minister to withdraw



his consul at Trieste, who is incurably anti-Italian. He attempts to defend him, but I have very clear proof as to his guilt and he must yield.

Soddu says that Graziani, after having emptied Italy in order to supply Libya, does not feel that he is in a position to attack Egypt, principally because of the heat. He intends to postpone the operation until spring. I do not yet know the Duce's reactions, but I predict that they will be violent. From Germany, too, come rumours of a postponement of the attack. Can they be true?

Four agents of our Military Intelligence Service were surprised this evening in the Yugoslav Legation. We must encourage the rumour that they were only common burglars.

AUGUST 4, 1940. Mussolini has returned to Rome. He is in quite good humour, notwithstanding the postponement of the offensive in Libya and the reopening of an old leg wound which he suffered during the last war. He does not refer to the military situation. On the other hand, Badoglio informs me that Graziani has been ordered to Rome. Meanwhile, the Duke of Aosta has begun his offensive against British Somaliland, with excellent prospects.

Mussolini speaks of our relations with Russia, and believes that the moment has come to take further steps to better them. I agree.

From Berlin Alfieri reports that the sudden return of Hitler and of the highest Nazi officials leads him to suspect imminent operations, about which we, as usual, have been told nothing.

AUGUST 5, 1940. Invectives by the Duce against "the Italians", which take place whenever he meets opposition to his projects. The principal points he made were: decrease in the birth rate, the tendency toward alcoholism, and complacency. He says that one day he will make a sweeping speech entitled "The Secret Wounds of Italy". He will do this in order to confront the nation with its own weaknesses. He said that the principal reason for the reforestation of the Apennine regions is to make the climate of Italy more rigorous.<sup>219</sup> This will bring

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<sup>219</sup> The meaning of this sentence is somewhat obscure. What Mussolini seems to have had in mind was that by planting forests in the Apennines he had hoped to make the Italians as virile as the Germans. It was a naïve idea on a par with the introduction of the goose-step into the Italian army.

about an elimination of the weaker stock and an improvement of the Italian race.

Moral: the Duce is dissatisfied because Graziani, who has laid so much blame on Balbo, now refuses to face difficulties and does not want to attack in Egypt. To-day he has called him for an accounting, but I don't yet know with what results. Mussolini's uneasiness will increase if, as seems probable, Hitler soon launches his offensive against the British Isles.

AUGUST 6, 1940. Alfieri now says that German activity is slowed down and this time fails to explain the reason. Could there be anything in the rumours about a separate peace through the King of Sweden?

Mussolini talks very much about an Italian attack on Yugoslavia during the second half of September. Therefore, he wishes me to put aside the Croatian problem and arrive quickly at an agreement with Russia, which should have a "spectacular" character. He also raises the question of my going to Moscow. Litvinov's visit was never returned. All this seems premature. In any case, I shall talk to Mackensen about it. As regards the attack on Yugoslavia, I do not believe that, unless something new crops up, Hitler will permit the status quo of the Balkans to be disturbed.

The Duce telephones during the evening, exultant because our troops have entered Zeila. I do not know the real importance of this.

AUGUST 7, 1940. Nothing new.

AUGUST 8, 1940. Graziani has come to see me. He talks about the attack on Egypt as a very serious undertaking, and says that our present preparations are far from perfect. He attacks Badoglio, who does not check the Duce's aggressive spirit—a fact which "for a man who knows Africa means that he must suffer from softening of the brain, or, what is worse, from bad faith". "The water supply is entirely insufficient. We move towards a defeat which, in the desert, must inevitably develop into a rapid and total disaster."

I reported this to the Duce, who was very upset about it because in his last conversation with Graziani he had received the impression that the offensive would start in a few days. Graziani did not set any date with me. He would rather not

attack at all, or, at any rate, not for two or three months. Mussolini concluded that "one should only give jobs to people who are looking for at least one promotion. Graziani's only anxiety is to remain a Marshal".

Mackensen brings a plan for an identical protest to be made to Berne because of an insolent speech by a Swiss general. We agree on its general lines.

According to Alfieri, the offensive in the English Channel has been delayed because of bad weather. But, according to General Marras, the delay is caused by secret conversations supposedly going on now. The Alfieri version is the more probable.

AUGUST 9, 1940. Nothing new.

AUGUST 10, 1940. Meeting of the Council of Ministers. A long Mussolini monologue, which covered everything from the events of the war and alcoholism to his inevitable attack on the Italian middle class. "A bourgeois," he said, "is one who is neither a worker nor a farmer, and who is concerned only with his own interests." As for me, I still prefer Flaubert's definition: "Bourgeois is anything that is vulgar". The bourgeois concept has more of a psychological than an economic significance. But on this problem of the so-called struggle against the bourgeoisie there are many things to be said, and some day it would be well to say them.

I talked to the Duce about the difficulties that have arisen on the Greek-Albanian frontier. I don't wish to dramatize the situation, but the Greek attitude is very tricky. The Duce is considering an "act of force, because since 1923 he has some accounts to settle, and the Greeks deceive themselves if they think that he has forgotten".

News of further delay in the offensive comes from Berlin. Will it take place? When? And in what form? We know nothing. The fact is that the Germans keep us in the dark about everything, just as they did when we were neutral, even though we are now fighting beside them.

AUGUST 11, 1940. Mussolini still speaks of the Greek question and wants particulars on Ciamuria. He has prepared a Stefani dispatch, which will start agitation on the question. He has called Jacomoni and Visconti Prasca to Rome, and intends to confer with them. He speaks of a surprise attack

against Greece towards the end of September. If he has decided on this, I feel that he must work fast. It is dangerous to give the Greeks time to prepare.

The German air force has asked that our planes be sent to collaborate in the action against Great Britain. When we offered them a month ago they were promptly refused. Now Germany asks for them. Why? I am not very much in favour of this for technical and also for political reasons.

Favagrossa compares the Italian situation to a bath with the stopper removed and with the taps turned off. Only from the shower, which is France, is it possible to expect a little water to run. But up to now this has not happened. We are very much concerned about tin, copper, and nickel. By the end of September we shall have exactly nothing so far as tin is concerned.

AUGUST 12, 1940. I accompany Jacomoni and Visconti Prasca to the Duce, who sets down the political and military lines for action against Greece. If Ciamuria and Corfu are yielded without striking a blow, we shall not ask for anything more. If, on the other hand, any resistance is attempted, we shall go the limit. Jacomoni and Visconti Prasca consider the action possible, and even easy, provided, however, that it be undertaken at once. On the other hand, the Duce is still of the opinion, for general military reasons, that the action should be postponed until towards the end of September.

From Germany news about air attacks, but nothing more. I have spoken over the telephone with Alfieri, who was more than usually vague. A new and violent outburst by Mussolini against the middle class. "After the war is over, I shall begin my attack on the middle class, which is cowardly and despicable. We must destroy it physically, and save perhaps 20 per cent, if that much." And he added: "I shall strike at it, and I shall say, like St. Dominic: 'God will choose his own!'"

In Somaliland we fight and advance.

AUGUST 13, 1940. Mussolini is very resentful toward the Duke of Aosta because of the delay in operations in Somaliland. He repeats this formula: "Princes ought to be enlisted as civilians."

AUGUST 14, 1940. At Leghorn to see the children.

AUGUST 15, 1940. A Greek vessel has been sunk by a submarine of unidentified nationality. The incident threatens to become serious. For myself, I consider the intemperance of de Vecchi at the bottom of it. I confer with the Duce, who desires to settle this incident peacefully. It was not necessary. I suggest sending a note to Greece. This will place the question on a diplomatic plane.

AUGUST 16, 1940. Nothing new.

AUGUST 17, 1940. Alfieri has had an interesting conference with von Ribbentrop. It can be summarized as follows: (1) that the German Government does not desire us to make too close a rapprochement with Russia; (2) that it is necessary to abandon any plan to attack Yugoslavia; (3) that an eventual action against Greece is not at all welcome in Berlin. It is a complete order to halt all along the line. According to von Ribbentrop, every effort must be concentrated against Great Britain, because there, and there alone, is "the question of life and death". This leads me to think that even in German opinion the war is going to be hard. The Duce himself has dictated our counter-proposal. Naturally, we accept the Berlin point of view, even as regards Greece. In fact, we put back in the drawer the note that we had already prepared.

At the seashore I saw Mollier, the press attaché of the German Embassy, who talks more than the Ambassador. He says that a landing is now imminent, and to this end thousands of landing craft are ready in the Channel ports; that the operation, which is a very bold one, will be hard and bloody, but certain as to its results. Mollier spoke of peace by the end of September.

AUGUST 18, 1940. Nothing very important. Only from Berlin a series of significant hints which lead us to consider the decisive attack against Great Britain very imminent. Mussolini believes them to be true, and is convinced that we shall have victory and peace by the end of next month. For this reason he wants to move fast in Egypt.

Badoglio and de Vecchi insult each other by letter, so the Duce has told me. He was pleased, and attributed to de Vecchi statements of which he could scarcely have been proud.

AUGUST 19, 1940. The Duce reads me a telegram he has sent to Graziani. He orders him to march on Egypt as soon as

a German patrol lands in England. Mussolini himself assumes responsibility for the order, knowing full well the objections that Graziani will make.

AUGUST 20, 1940. Graziani sends in a copy of a report from which it appears that all his generals declare themselves against the offensive in Egypt. I shall refer it to the Duce.

A speech by Churchill. For the first time in a year I read an English speech which is definite and forward-looking. One can feel that behind the façade of beautiful words and strong affirmations there is a will and a faith.

AUGUST 21, 1940. Nothing new.

AUGUST 22, 1940. Mussolini gives me a copy of certain military directives he has formulated, in which the actions against Yugoslavia and Greece are indefinitely postponed. It appears that the Germans have renewed their pressure, even on our headquarters, in this sense. The Duce wanted at first to give a copy of his directives to the German Embassy, then he telephoned to countermand his instructions. It appears that he prefers to send them in writing to Hitler.

Riccardi is now optimistic about our supplies. At the present rate of collection and acquisition there should not be any noticeable shortages until the end of 1941.

An important speech by Halifax. The British tone has changed, and the possibility of an understanding with Germany is not excluded. Is it possible that this explains the delay in the attack?

AUGUST 23, 1940. The Duce has prepared a letter—an outline of which goes to Hitler—and received an interesting one from Franco. The Caudillo talks about Spain coming into the war soon. He says that he has already approached the Germans to get what he needs. To us he has not specified what he had asked for.

AUGUST 24, 1940. Nothing new.

AUGUST 25, 1940. Nothing new. I am spending the day at Leghorn.

AUGUST 26, 1940. Von Ribbentrop telephoned several times. He is concerned about the turn taken by the controversy between the Hungarians and Rumanians. Germany wants, at all costs, to avoid a crisis in the Balkans. Hence, although he

does not speak of arbitration, von Ribbentrop is thinking of calling the two Ministers for Foreign Affairs to Vienna to give them the friendly advice of the Axis in seeking a solution. All this is naturally to be accompanied by a threat: whoever does not accept the advice will take upon himself all responsibility for future consequences. I agree, and the Duce approves. I instruct Ghigi<sup>220</sup> and Talamo to come to Rome in order to obtain more information. We shall go to Vienna within two or three days.

Von Ribbentrop informs me that he has dealt harshly with the Greek Minister, who had tried to knock at the doors of Berlin. He did not receive him, and has told him it would be more useful to speak with Italy, since Germany is in perfect accord with us about everything.

AUGUST 27, 1940. The meeting at Vienna is decided for to-morrow. The Hungarians and Rumanians will come on Thursday. Von Ribbentrop telephones that the Führer is of the opinion that the Rumanians should give up forty thousand square kilometres to Hungary, which country has asked for sixty thousand. Mussolini has no precise ideas on the subject, and gives me full liberty of action. He is entirely occupied with the plan of the attack on Egypt, and says that Keitel also thinks that the taking of Cairo is more important than the taking of London. Keitel has not said this to me. The attack is to take place on September 6th. What does Graziani think of it?

AUGUST 28, 1940. Hitler desires to speak to me before I go to Vienna. Hence we go by way of Salzburg. The weather is beautiful south of the Alps and cloudy in the north. The usual reception at Berchtesgaden. Hitler is cordial and serene as usual, but more tired than on other occasions. After lunch we speak first of the general situation. I have summarized the conference in a telegram to the Duce. Hitler explains the failure of the attack on Great Britain as due to the bad weather. He says that he will need at least two weeks of clear weather to neutralize British naval superiority, but from all that he said it seems to me probable that there is now a definite postponement of the attack. Until when? Nevertheless, Hitler seems resolved

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<sup>220</sup> Pelegrino Ghigi: Italian Minister to Rumania, 1938.

to go the limit, because, he tells me, he has rejected an attempt at mediation made by the King of Sweden.

We speak little of the Magyar-Rumanian question. He leaves the solution to von Ribbentrop and me. The only thing he has at heart is that peace be preserved in these parts, and that Rumanian oil continue to flow into his reservoirs.

By air to Vienna. The city, compared to what it was a year ago, seems to be in a more miserable condition: little traffic, shops that are ill-supplied, and a heavy atmosphere. The people on the streets are badly dressed and listless.

AUGUST 29, 1940. Ribbentrop and I decide to solve the problem by arbitration. If we once started a discussion we should never be able to end it. We first talk to the Hungarians. Czaky is reasonable; Teleki is hostile. Then Ribbentrop assails the Hungarians. Courtesy is not his forte. He accuses Hungary of having engaged in anti-German policy on more than one occasion. His words are rather threatening. The conversation with the Rumanian is less violent. Manoïlescu<sup>221</sup> doesn't know what to do or what to say and seems terrified for his country and for himself. We try to make him pay dearly for our guarantee of his frontiers. He, too, is convinced that this is an excellent thing, but thinks the price is high.

The Hungarians accepted this afternoon. The Rumanians will make us wait for their answer until four o'clock in the morning. In the meantime Ribbentrop and I trace the new frontier and dictate the terms of the arbitration. It is a difficult problem to solve; in fact, impossible to solve with any absolute justice. We shall try to be as fair as we can.

In Vienna they are eating less and badly. Hotels are short of provisions and disorganized to the point where they have quite lost their old character. The war weighs more heavily on this city than elsewhere. Austrian morale is not good either.

AUGUST 30, 1940. Ceremony of the signature at the Belvedere. The Hungarians can't contain their joy when they see the map. Then we hear a loud thud. It was Manoïlescu, who fainted on the table. Doctors, massage, camphorated oil. Finally he comes to, but shows the shock very much.

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<sup>221</sup> Mihail Manoïlescu: Rumanian economist. Minister to Austria. Minister for Foreign Affairs, July-September, 1940.



In the evening there is a demonstration in front of the hotel. Since they went to the trouble of organizing one, it should have been bigger and warmer. Vienna is truly grey.

AUGUST 31, 1940. I went hunting with Ribbentrop.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1940. I return to Rome. A conversation with the Duce. He is pleased by what has happened. He declares he is glad that the war will last beyond this month and, maybe, beyond the winter, because this will give Italy time to make greater sacrifices and thus enable him better to assert our rights. Will he prove right this time? And isn't there the danger that if the war doesn't end soon it may last beyond the time favourable for us? This is a question that is worth asking, and one which many Germans who have their heads screwed on the right way are now asking.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1940. Nothing new.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1940. Nothing new.

SEPTEMBER 4, 1940. The Americans lend fifty destroyers to Great Britain. In Berlin a great deal of excitement and indignation. The Duce, on the other hand, says that he is indifferent. At the request of the Germans we stop our radio transmissions at 10 p.m. It seems that this step was taken because of the advantage which British aircraft derived from the prolongation of the transmission.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1940. Mussolini returned to Rome. He is alarmed by the situation in Rumania as it is described by the military attaché. Ghigi is more calm. They are also calm in Berlin. Hitler has spoken, and has uttered harsh threats against England. But he makes no allusion to the blitzkrieg, and some expressions used by him, such, for example, as his clownish ridiculing of Duff Cooper, leave me greatly perplexed. He must be nervous.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1940. The Duce is rather excited. I don't know why. He is taking it out on his generals, whom he removes summarily, as well as on the Germans, who are preventing our rapprochement with Moscow.

King Carol of Rumania<sup>222</sup> has abdicated. He is paying, but only in part, for his silly buffoonery, his betrayals, and his crimes.

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<sup>222</sup> King Carol of Rumania: After abdication in 1940 went with Mme. Lupescu to Spain, Cuba and Mexico. Went to Brazil in 1944, where he is still living.

SEPTEMBER 7, 1940. Council of Ministers. At the end of the meeting the Duce makes some political statements. He begins by affirming that, in his opinion, the war is now bound to last part of the winter, although he considers the landing of the Germans in England as a certainty. As to what concerns us more directly, he has again taken up the matter of our attack on Egypt. It was to take place to-day, but Graziani has asked that it be postponed for one month. Badoglio was in favour of the delay. Mussolini vetoes this, taking upon himself responsibility for the decision. If Graziani does not attack on Monday he will be replaced. He has also given orders to the Navy to make a move to meet the British fleet and to give battle. As to the more distant future, he said that he is now certain that between 1945 and 1950 war will break out between the Axis and Russia. By that time he will have completed his armament programme on the basis of one hundred divisions.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1940. Graziani has answered that he will obey. The attack will begin to-morrow. Many military experts are sceptical. Among them the Prince of Piedmont, who has expressed to me his doubts on the prospects and wisdom of the enterprise.

The naval encounter has not as yet taken place because our aerial reconnaissance has not yet located the route of the British fleet sailing from Gibraltar.

SEPTEMBER 9, 1940. The drive against Egypt has suffered a new delay. Graziani is doing his best to approach his objective, and is preparing to begin action on the 12th. Never has a military operation been undertaken so much against the will of the commanders.

What is happening in London under German bombing? From here it is difficult to judge. The blow must be hard. Decisive? I don't believe it.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1940. Nothing new.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1940. The beginning of the attack on Egypt is confirmed for to-morrow. Even General Carboni, who has never been unduly optimistic, says that our advance as far as Mersa Matruh is easy, and that it is possible to reach Alexandria.

German air action continues against London. We do not know exactly what the results are. It seems incredible, but we

do not have a single informant in Great Britain. On the other hand, the Germans have many. In London itself there is a German agent who makes radio transmissions up to twenty-nine times a day. At least, so it is stated by Admiral Canaris.

SEPTEMBER 12, 1940. Nothing new.

SEPTEMBER 13, 1940. Von Ribbentrop telephones from Berlin. He wants to come to Rome next week in order to confer on two subjects: Russia and America. The visit may prove useful. I agree to it.

Graziani must have launched his attack, but up to now we have no precise information.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1940. The attack on Egypt has begun. At the moment the British are withdrawing without fighting. They wish to draw us away from our base and lengthen our lines of communication. The Duce, whose good humour has returned, considers the arrival at Mersa Matruh as a great victory, especially since it permits our Air Force to attack Alexandria by day, with fighter escort.

No definite news from the north. The Duce is still convinced that the landing will take place, while General Marras, who thought it certain until to-day, is beginning to doubt it. Maybe we shall learn the truth from Ribbentrop.

The Russian attitude is becoming alarmingly equivocal.

SEPTEMBER 15, 1940. I go to Leghorn, later to Spezia, to preside at ceremonies in honour of my father. The statue by Messina<sup>223</sup> is a work worthy of the Renaissance. When it was unveiled the image of my father seemed so powerfully alive that I was thrilled.

SEPTEMBER 16, 1940. Mussolini is worried because of the slow progress in Egypt. But he is angry with Berti<sup>224</sup> who, because of his slowness, may lose us our booty. The fact is that no fighting has yet begun. Only some rear-guard action.

Ribbentrop's visit has been confirmed for Tuesday.

SEPTEMBER 17, 1940. It seems that things in Egypt are going better and better. The British are withdrawing with unforeseen rapidity. According to military experts there will be

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<sup>223</sup> Messina: Italian sculptor, protégé of Bottai.

<sup>224</sup> General Francesco Berti: Known as the "sly murderer".

resistance at Mersa Matruh. Others believe, on the other hand, that it will come at Alexandria. Mussolini is radiant with joy. He has taken the entire responsibility of the offensive on his shoulders, and he is proud that he was right.

SEPTEMBER 18, 1940. Nothing new.

SEPTEMBER 19, 1940. Arrival of von Ribbentrop. He is in good humour and pleased by the welcome that is given him by "the applauding squad", which was very well mobilized by the police commissioner. In the car Ribbentrop speaks at once of the surprise he has brought in his brief-case: a military alliance with Japan, to be signed within the next few days in Berlin. Russian dreams of conquest vanished for ever when the guarantee was given to Rumania in the rooms of the Belvedere at Vienna. He thinks that such a move will have a double advantage: against Russia and against America. Under the threat of the Japanese fleet, America will not dare to move. I express a contrary opinion. The anti-Russian guarantee is very good, but the anti-American statement is less appropriate, because Washington will increasingly favour the British. As for England, von Ribbentrop says that the weather has been very bad and that the clouds even more than the R.A.F. have prevented final success. However, the invasion will take place anyway as soon as there are a few days of fine weather. The landing is ready and possible. English territorial defence is non-existent. A single German division will suffice to bring about a complete collapse.

In the afternoon a conference at the Palazzo Venezia, the stenographic report of which is filed elsewhere. In general I find von Ribbentrop in better spirits than at Vienna, and the principal reason for his elation is the pact with Japan, which he considers of fundamental importance, and which, in addition, is one of his own personal successes.

SEPTEMBER 20, 1940. A second conversation with Ribbentrop. It deals principally with Spanish intervention, which now seems to be assured and imminent. Ribbentrop reads a message sent by Hitler to Franco. It is partly political and partly military, written with the convincing logic which the Führer's writings frequently contain.

D'Aieta reports to me that Ribbentrop's optimistic forecasts

are not shared by the officials with him here, who think that this may be a long war. Some of them think it will be a hard war.

SEPTEMBER 21, 1940. I went with Ribbentrop to Villa d'Este and to Villa Adriana. In the last few days Ribbentrop has wanted to meet many people both inside and outside political circles. Everybody disliked him.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1940. Final conference with von Ribbentrop. It is panoramic in its scope. Von Ribbentrop alludes to the possibility of the Axis taking the initiative in breaking diplomatic relations with the United States. Mussolini is inclined to agree. I do not, first of all because I believe we must avoid a conflict with America at all costs, and then because I believe that we should be rendering a signal service to Roosevelt, for whom it would be advantageous to present himself at the elections in the guise of one who has been attacked. Anyway, the decision is not imminent, and I hope that I shall be able to put in my oar.

The weather in the north continues bad, and with the passing of summer the prophecies made by von Ribbentrop disappear in the distance. The Hungarians are laying too heavy a hand on Transylvania. In agreement with von Ribbentrop, we take steps at Budapest to recommend that moderation which, in the hour of success, represents the greatest wisdom. However, the Hungarians are beginning to circulate propaganda leaflets in which are printed the words: "Trianon<sup>225</sup> is dead. Vienna, too, will die."

SEPTEMBER 23, 1940. No news.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1940. The final text of the Tripartite Pact is agreed upon. The signature can now take place in a few days.

During the night Mackensen telephoned about de Gaulle. He appeared at Dakar with some British ships and called on the French to surrender. The Governor resisted, and Pétain asked the Armistice Commission for authorization to send

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<sup>225</sup> The Treaty of Trianon was signed between the Allies and Hungary in June, 1920. A special meeting was necessary for this treaty because the Hungarian delegates had been unable to attend the Peace Conference in 1919 in consequence of the Bela Kun revolution.

certain French ships, among them *Strasbourg*, into the Atlantic. The Germans objected. I, too, object. We cannot clearly understand de Gaulle's attitude. I personally am convinced that as time works against the possibility of a British collapse, solidarity between Free France and the French Colonial Empire will become more evident.

I spoke about it to the Duce, who is also thinking of the occupation of Corsica. He is right. If we don't get there the British will, and from Ghisonaccia the Royal Air Force will attack Italy.

Cavagnari absolutely denies that a cruiser of the *London* type has been sunk. According to him, it is one of the usual bragging claims of the Air Force to spite the Navy, at which they are always poking fun.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1940. I went to Florence for Marzio's operation; thank God, everything goes well. At the station a telephone call reached me from Ribbentrop announcing that the signature of the Alliance will take place on Friday. I must leave immediately.

SEPTEMBER 26, 1940. I am on my way to Berlin. On Hitler's order the train is stopped at Munich. Attacks by the Royal Air Force endanger the zone, and the Führer does not wish to expose me to the risk of a long stop in the open country. I sleep in Munich and will continue by air.

SEPTEMBER 27, 1940. The Pact is signed. The ceremony was more or less like that of the Pact of Steel. But the atmosphere is cooler. Even the Berlin street crowd, a comparatively small one, composed mostly of school children, cheers with regularity but without conviction. Japan is far away. Its help is doubtful. One thing alone is certain: that the war will be long. This does not please the Germans, who had come to believe that with the end of summer the end of the war would also come. A winter of war is hard to bear. More so since food is scarce in Berlin, and it is easy to see that the window displays of the shops promise much more than is actually inside.

Another thing that contributes to the depressed spirit of Berlin life is the constant recurrence of air raids. Every night the citizens spend from four to five hours in the cellar. They lack sleep, they are cold, there is promiscuity between men and

women, and these things do not make for good humour. The number of people with colds is incredible. Bomb damage is slight; nervousness is very great. At ten o'clock in the evening everyone looks at his watch. People want to return home to their dear ones. All this does not yet justify the pessimism in certain quarters where the memory of the first war is being evoked and they are beginning to think of the worst. But it is a fact that the spirit of Germany to-day is not that of last June or even of last August.

I had two conversations with Hitler, one formal after the signing, the other the next day. He did not speak of the current situation. He spoke rather of Spanish intervention, to which he is opposed because it would cost more than it is worth. He proposed a meeting with the Duce at the Brenner Pass, and I immediately accepted. No more invasion of England. No more blitz destruction of England. From Hitler's speech there now emerges worry about a long war. He wishes to conserve his armed power. He speaks with his usual decision, with less impetuosity but with as much determination as ever. Ribbentrop is more nervous. Perhaps it is his bad health, and perhaps he has other reasons for complaint. He had relied too much on a lightning end of the conflict not to be disappointed. Towards us Italians the Germans are impeccably courteous. Ansaldo judges that the courtesy is in proportion to the need the Germans have of us. With the Spaniards, on the other hand, the Germans are less courteous. Generally speaking, Serrano Suñer's mission was not successful, and the man himself did not and could not please the Germans.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1940. On my way home.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1940. I confer with the Duce. I find him in good humour and very happy that Italy could score in Egypt a success which affords her the glory she has sought in vain for three centuries.

He is rather irritated by Badoglio, who now seems to have assumed the role of delaying Graziani's march.

OCTOBER 1, 1940. Serrano Suñer arrives in Rome. General Queipo de Llano is also at the station, but they do not greet each other and Queipo declines an invitation to lunch. In speaking of Queipo, Serrano Suñer called him "a bandit and

a beast". All this has symbolical meaning: it represents the situation in Spanish public life to-day.

I have a long conversation with the Duce which is recorded elsewhere. There is one point in the record of the conversation which I had to take out of the copy given to the Germans: Serrano's colourful invectives against the Germans for their absolute lack of tact in dealing with Spain. Serrano is right. The Germans are not models of courtesy, and Ribbentrop less so than the others, even though this time there is something to be said for him. For years the Spaniards have been asking for a lot and giving nothing in return. However, there are other ways in which Serrano could have expressed himself.

OCTOBER 2, 1940. The Duce is very anxious about an attack to take place soon on Mersa Matruh, and is irritated by Badoglio because the latter does not think the action can be carried out this month. I speak of it with Graziani because the Duce wants to know what he thinks of it. Graziani feels that we must still wait for some time, at least all of November, to complete our logistic preparation, which is the only real guarantee of success.

He is afraid that the English may resist for a long time at Mersa Matruh. If our supply lines should not function well we would have to retreat. And in the desert a retreat is equivalent to a rout.

A conference with Serrano. He says nothing new, but he is postponing his departure until after my return from the Brenner Pass, in order to be duly informed.

OCTOBER 3, 1940. Biseo, a man who really understands aviation, has painted a black picture of our Air Force in North Africa. Our planning is bad, and we are short of fighter planes. Although the English are numerically inferior, they cause us plenty of trouble. Biseo thinks it will be difficult to carry our attack on Egypt to its logical conclusion.

A partial crisis in London with the resignation of Chamberlain from the Government. Information is scarce and uncertain, nor does it enable us to make any kind of diagnosis of the significance of this development. A long conference with the King, who is vaguely pessimistic and fundamentally hostile to Germany. He repeats his favourite refrain about the scant security



which German promises give. He is also sceptical as to the condition of our armed forces.

OCTOBER 4, 1940. Rarely have I seen the Duce in such good humour and good shape as at the Brenner Pass to-day. The meeting was cordial and the conversations were certainly the most interesting of all that have taken place so far. Hitler put at least some of his cards on the table, and talked to us about his plans for the future. I have recorded the conversation elsewhere. These are my general impressions: (1) there is no longer any talk about a landing in the British Isles and preparations already made remain where they were; (2) it is hoped to attract France into the orbit of the anti-British coalition, since it is now realized that the Anglo-Saxons are still a hard nut to crack; (3) greater importance is given to the Mediterranean sector, which is good for us. Hitler was energetic and again extremely anti-Bolshevist. "Bolshevism," he said, "is the doctrine of people who are lowest in the scale of civilization." Ribbentrop, on the other hand, was very silent and in noticeably bad health.

Anfuso, who spent a long time with the Germans of Hitler's entourage and who is the most pro-German of my colleagues, is not too well satisfied, and says that a spirit of adventure seems still to drive the Germans.

I had a long conversation with the Duce on the train. He said that he will soon fire Muti because he is incapable and an opportunist; he also said that he will spur Graziani on to start the offensive sooner, and that he detests the King "because the King is the only defeatist in the country".

OCTOBER 5, 1940. I inform Serrano of the results of the meeting in so far as they concern Spain, and he is only half satisfied. Why hasn't he yet seen that the Germans have had an eye on Morocco for a long time?

The Duce approved the report on the Brenner meeting, and asks that a copy be sent to the King, as well as a résumé to Badoglio. He pronounced unfavourable judgments on Badoglio, and declared that in the spring he will think about finding a substitute for him.

OCTOBER 6, 1940. I go to Leghorn.

OCTOBER 7, 1940. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 8, 1940. A telephone call from the Duce, requesting that we take action in Rumania to elicit a request for Italian troops. He is very angry because only German forces are present in the Rumanian oil regions. It is a delicate and difficult step to take, but I imagine that Ghigi will carry it through all right.

OCTOBER 9, 1940. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 10, 1940. Ribbentrop telephoned, informing me that the Hungarian Government has again asked permission to adhere to the Tripartite Alliance. While formerly he was against it, Ribbentrop is now entirely favourable, because no one who wants to join in the anti-British fight must be turned down. Mussolini gives his approval, though a bit unwillingly, since he does not wish to enlarge the Tripartite Alliance. Once the Hungarians are admitted he believes we should have to open the door to the Rumanians also. I inform Ribbentrop of this, and he receives the suggestion coldly.

OCTOBER 11, 1940. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 12, 1940. The Duce returns. He is very much vexed at Graziani because the latter has once more answered in a dilatory manner his order to start the offensive. The Duce speaks of replacing him, and mentions the names of Generals Messe and Vercellino.

But above all he is indignant at the German occupation of Rumania. He says that this has impressed Italian public opinion very adversely, because, in view of the decisions taken at Vienna, nobody had expected this to happen. "Hitler always faces me with a *fait accompli*. This time I am going to pay him back in his own coin. He will find out from the papers that I have occupied Greece. In this way the equilibrium will be re-established." I ask if he has come to an agreement with Badoglio. "Not yet," he answers, "but I shall send in my resignation as an Italian if anyone objects to our fighting the Greeks." The Duce seems determined to act now. In fact, I believe that the military operation will be useful and easy.

OCTOBER 13, 1940. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 14, 1940. Mussolini speaks to me again about our action in Greece, and fixes the date for October 26th. Jacomoni gives very satisfactory information, especially on the state

of mind of the population of Ciamuria, which is favourable to us.

OCTOBER 15, 1940. A meeting with the Duce at the Palazzo Venezia, to discuss the Greek enterprise. Badoglio, Roatta, Soddu, Jacomoni, Visconti Prasca, and myself take part in it. The discussion is available in a stenographic report.

Afterwards, at the Palazzo Chigi, I speak with Ranza and Visconti Prasca, who explain their military plans. I speak also with Jacomoni, who gives an account of the political situation. He says that in Albania the attack on Greece is awaited keenly and enthusiastically. Albanian youth, which has always been reserved in its attitude towards us, now makes open manifestations of approval.

OCTOBER 16, 1940. I receive a copy of a report from Graziani. He declares that to resume his march in Egypt he will need at least two months. I immediately send the document to the Duce. I can imagine his indignation.

OCTOBER 17, 1940. The Duce is at Terni. Marshal Badoglio comes to see me, and speaks very seriously about our action in Greece. The three heads of the General Staff have unanimously pronounced themselves against it. The present forces are insufficient, and the Navy does not feel that it can carry out a landing at Prevesa because the water is too shallow. All of Badoglio's talk has a pessimistic tinge. He foresees the prolongation of the war, and with it the exhaustion of our already meagre resources. I listen, and do not argue. I insist that, from a political point of view, the moment is good. Greece is isolated. Turkey will not move. Neither will Yugoslavia. If the Bulgarians enter the war it will be on our side. From the military point of view I express no opinion. Badoglio must, without any hesitation, repeat to Mussolini what he has told me.

I go to Naples. I meet Edda, who is returning with a hospital ship. I speak with the wounded. They are magnificent.

OCTOBER 18, 1940. I go early to see the Duce. I find Soddu in the ante-room. He has spoken with Badoglio, who declared that if we move against Greece he will resign. I report to the Duce, who is already in a very bad humour because of Graziani. He has a violent outburst of rage, and says that he will go personally to Greece "to witness the incredible shame of

Italians who are afraid of Greeks". He is planning to move at any cost, and if Badoglio presents his resignation it will be accepted immediately. But Badoglio not only does not present it, he doesn't even repeat to Mussolini what he told me yesterday. In fact, the Duce states that Badoglio only brought this up in order to obtain a postponement of a few days, at least two.

I go with Manoïlescu to the Duce. A long and gloomy lamentation over the insolence of the Hungarians, which is undoubtedly a fact but which we can hardly stop. On the other hand, after twenty years of Rumanian oppression a reaction was to be expected, especially as the Magyars are at heart of a savage and harsh temperament.

From an intercepted cable it seems that Turkey is preparing to move if Greece is attacked. I do not believe it, and the Duce considers it out of the question.

OCTOBER 19, 1940. Council of Ministers. The Duce speaks of the situation, and gives us to understand that action is imminent, but he does not mention the date, nor does he give precise details about the direction it will take.

Anfuso returns from Sofia, where he delivered a letter from the Duce to King Boris. It was not an invitation to action, but rather information on the decision taken. It was left up to him to decide his course as dictated by his conscience as King and as a Bulgarian. He answered with a written and sealed message, but in the long conference he had with Anfuso his attitude was rather evasive, in accordance with his habits and his character. Above all, he fears the Turks.

OCTOBER 20, 1940. I see Bismarck, who informs me of two matters, both of them very important: namely that during the next week Hitler will meet Franco somewhere in France, and that, during the course of his visit, he will speak with French Government officials to see if he can put into practise the projects discussed at the Brenner Pass. These are not very satisfactory to me. In the long run, a rapprochement between Berlin and Paris could not but work against us. But is this possible?

OCTOBER 21, 1940. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 22, 1940. This is a sad day, more than ever because it is the anniversary of the death of my good sister, Maria.

Mussolini returns. He has prepared a letter for Hitler on the general situation. He alludes to our impending action in Greece. but does not make clear either the form or the date, because he fears that once again an order might come to halt us. Many indications lead us to believe that in Berlin they are not very enthusiastic about our going to Athens. The date fixed is now October 28th. General Pricolo reports that Badoglio has given orders for a limited air action. The Duce does not agree. He wants us to attack very vigorously, because he would like everything to go to pieces at the first clash. If we leave the Greeks too much time to reflect and to breathe, the English will come, and perhaps the Turks, and the situation will become long drawn out and difficult. The Duce can now hardly stand Badoglio, whom he considers a barrier between himself and the troops.

I begin to draw up the ultimatum which Grazzi will hand to Metaxas at two o'clock in the morning of October 28th. Naturally it is a document that allows no way out for Greece. Either she accepts occupation or she will be attacked.

OCTOBER 23, 1940. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 24, 1940. With General Pricolo I examine the plan of the air attack on Greece. It is good, because it is energetic and bold. By a hard blow at the start it will be possible to bring about a complete collapse within a few hours.

During the evening von Ribbentrop telephones from a little railway station in France. He reports on conversations with Franco and with Pétain, and is, on the whole, satisfied with the results achieved. He says that the programme of collaboration is heading towards concrete results. I do not conceal my doubt and suspicion. Nevertheless, it is essential that the inclusion of France in the Axis shall not be to our detriment. Von Ribbentrop also speaks of an impending visit by Hitler to a city in Northern Italy, to confer with the Duce.

OCTOBER 25, 1940. With the Duce I settle upon our diplomatic policy for our move in Greece. He also approves of having a meeting with the Soviet Ambassador immediately after the attack. It is a gesture that may calm the troubled waters, perhaps prepare the ground for the future. In the meantime, von Mackensen conveys some more particulars

on Hitler's conferences with the French and Spaniards, and announces the terms of a secret tripartite protocol with Spain.

The Duce sends a letter to General Visconti Prasca, spurring him on to action.

Von Ribbentrop telephones. He proposes a meeting and the proposal is accepted. It is to take place on Monday, the 28th, in Florence, between Hitler and Mussolini. This rush of the Führer to Italy so soon after his meeting with Pétain is not at all pleasing to me. I hope he will not offer us a cup of hemlock because of our claims against France. This will be a bitter pill for the Italian people, even more so than the Versailles delusion.

OCTOBER 26, 1940. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 27, 1940. Numerous incidents in Albania. Action is expected at any moment. And yet the four diplomats, German, Japanese, Spanish, and Hungarian, to whom I handed the text of the ultimatum to Greece, were rather surprised.

I have prepared the agenda for the meeting in Florence to-morrow. Hitler will remain there for only a few hours, and then will leave for the Brenner Pass.

OCTOBER 28, 1940. We attack in Albania and confer in Florence. In both places things have gone well. Notwithstanding the bad weather, the troops are moving fast, even if air support is lacking.

In Florence the conference, of which there is a stenographic report elsewhere, is of the greatest interest, and proves that German support has not failed us.

The Duce is in very good humour. He speaks at length about the condition of the Party. He lays aside Ricci's candidature and accepts the name of Serena. He would also like to consider Marziali, the Prefect of Milan, but I dissuade him. It would be a disaster—worse than Muti.

OCTOBER 29, 1940. The weather is bad, but the advance continues. Diplomatic reactions in the Balkans are quite limited for the time being. No one makes a move to defend the Greeks. It is now a question of speed, and we must act quickly.

I leave for Tirana during the evening.

OCTOBER 30, 1940. At Tirana. Bad weather. I do not

fly. I inspect the public works, the roads, the port. Things are going a little slowly. It's because of the rain.

OCTOBER 31, 1940. Continued bad weather. I write a long letter to the Duce. Here they complain of the ill-will of the General Staff, which has not done what it should have done to prepare for the action. Badoglio was convinced that the Greek question could have been settled at the peace table, and his attitude was affected by this prejudice. This has resulted in much weaker preparations than we were led to expect.

NOVEMBER 1, 1940. The sun has finally come out. I take advantage of it to carry out a spectacular bombardment of Salonika. On my return I am attacked by Greek planes. All goes well. Two of theirs fell, but I must confess that it was the first time that I've had them on my tail. It is an ugly sensation.

I went from Tirana to Taranto to confer with the Duce, and then from Taranto to Rome, whence I will leave for Germany.

NOVEMBER 2, 1940. On my way to Sudetenland.

NOVEMBER 3, 1940. I made a report of my conversations with Ribbentrop. I have nothing to add. I saw no one except officials and foresters—not enough to get any impressions.

Last night, while Ribbentrop talked to his guests, repeating his favourite motto that the war was already won, a German Army major turned to me and said in his laboured French: "This phrase was given to us in 1914, in 1915, in 1916, and 1917. I believed it. In 1918 I wished I were dead." His calm sincerity and sadness impressed me. Let's hope that too many Germans don't think in this way.

NOVEMBER 4, 1940. I leave for Italy.

NOVEMBER 5, 1940. On my way home.

NOVEMBER 6, 1940. Mussolini is dissatisfied over the way things are going in Greece. The attack on Corcia did take place, even though the results were not those bragged about by the British radio. The enemy has made some progress and it is a fact that on the eighth day of operations the initiative is in their hands. Soddu has left for Albania and will assume command. Visconti will remain in command of the Army of the Epirus.

I don't think that we have come to the point where we must bandage our heads, although many are beginning to think so. As a matter of fact, in the evening Mussolini is calmer. The forces now concentrated in the Corcia sector indicate that the Greek push may be definitely slowed up. Afterwards the counter-attack and success will come. Perhaps even much sooner than is expected.

NOVEMBER 7, 1940. I confer with Benini, who has just returned from Tirana, and accompany him to the Duce, to whom he makes a long report. On the Corcia sector our collapse began when a frightened battalion of Albanians ran away. It seems there was no treachery. Our soldiers did miracles. Entire Greek divisions were stopped by the resistance put up by platoons of customs guards, and the Greeks did not pass until the defenders had died to the last man. We withdrew to a defensive line. Soddu maintains that the arrival of a few regiments of Alpine troops would definitely eliminate all dangers. On the Epirus sector Visconti is still relatively optimistic and thinks that we can place ourselves in a position to bring about the fall of Janina. Soddu is not of this opinion and thinks we ought to drop this manoeuvre, augment our forces, and repeat our attack.

The civilian organization is excellent. The port of Durazzo is operating at full capacity, but is not too crowded with ships. So also are the roads, which ensure a continuous and safe flow of traffic between the front and the rear.

In the afternoon I go to the reception given by the Soviets. This creates a profound sensation in the diplomatic corps. It is the first time that I have crossed the portals of this embassy as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

NOVEMBER 8, 1940. The news given by Jacomoni does not coincide with that from headquarters, which is more pessimistic. The Duce has a long conversation with Badoglio and Roatta, and makes plans for the dispatch of troops. It appears that Badoglio is lugubrious, and this irritates the Duce. He is especially irritated because Badoglio asks for four months more. Too long. We must act immediately and energetically. The Greek attack is slowing down, and they have no reserves. Grazzi, returning from Athens, confirms that the internal con-



ditions of the country are very bad, and that their resistance is made of soap bubbles. According to him, Metaxas, receiving our ultimatum in his night-shirt and dressing-gown, was ready to yield. He became unyielding only after having talked with the King, and after the intervention of the British Minister.

In the evening news is better. The Greek attack is weakening on all sectors.

NOVEMBER 9, 1940. The situation is stationary on the Albanian front. The Greek attack has lost its impetus and is dying out. But we, too, unfortunately, have not the strength to resume our advance. We shall do so in a few weeks. The Duce is now very angry with Jacomoni and Visconti, who had represented the operation as too easy and sure of success.

Hitler has made a speech. I didn't like it. Too many personal arguments to be convincing. The purpose of the speech is to raise the morale of the German people, who are disappointed at the results of the American elections. But did the Führer succeed? Mussolini plans to speak on November 18th. He is aware of the fact that the internal situation has become difficult and that a word from him is needed.

NOVEMBER 10, 1940. An offensive thrust by our cavalry in the vicinity of Prevesa made good progress and met with no resistance, which proves that the Greeks are only holding a weak line and that having broken this we shall go on with ease. If we had two divisions in Albania to-day we could launch them with certainty of success.

Neville Chamberlain is dead. Of the two occasions I saw him, in Munich and in Rome. I have pleasant memories. He was a simple man, spontaneous and human. Mussolini does not attach any weight to the event, and commented: "This time he definitely missed the bus," and he was so pleased with his own remark that he asked me to include it in my diary.

NOVEMBER 11, 1940. I received to-day Stackic, a lawyer from Belgrade, who was introduced to me by Galeazzo di Bagno. He is on a mission from the Royal House of Serbia and, more precisely, for Antic, Minister of the Royal House. It appears that Antic would like to meet me for the purpose of strengthening ties between Italy and Yugoslavia. He even talks of an alliance with far-reaching guarantees, among which

is included the demilitarization of the Adriatic. I referred the matter to Mussolini, who encouraged the project. I am extremely favourable to it. I always considered an attack on Yugoslavia a difficult undertaking and not conducive to the future equilibrium of Europe. Instead of gathering for ourselves a mass of uneasy and untrustworthy Croats, I believe it is better to create a solid basis of understanding between Italy and Yugoslavia. This would be useful, whether the morrow brings us an anti-Russian or an anti-German policy.

From Albania we receive news that the situation is re-established. Had we had more adequate forces we could have gone far. Now we can only wait. Unfortunately, success, when it does come, will no longer be of the first magnitude.

From many sources, and especially from Moscow, comes news of a certain anti-Italian attitude, and even actual anti-Italian propaganda that the Germans are spreading in Greece.

NOVEMBER 12, 1940. A black day. The British, without warning, have attacked the Italian fleet at anchor in Taranto, and have sunk the dreadnought *Cavour* and seriously damaged the battleships *Littorio* and *Duilio*. These ships will remain out of the fight for many months. I thought I would find the Duce downhearted. Instead, he took the blow quite well and does not, at the moment, seem to have fully realized its gravity. When Badoglio last came to see me at the Palazzo Chigi, he said that when we attacked Greece we should immediately have to move the fleet, which would no longer be safe in the port of Taranto; why was this not done a fortnight after the beginning of operations and with a full moon?

The British bombardment also did serious damage to Durazzo. The Agio oil refinery is burning. Fortunately the port is intact. It is very important to keep it from being damaged, since it is our only access to Albania. It has worked well and is still working splendidly. No slowing down or bottleneck in this port. I remember what happened at Massawa at the beginning of the Ethiopian campaign, and the comparison is gratifying, but anti-aircraft defence is scarce, and the British attacks will most certainly be intensified.

NOVEMBER 13, 1940. The Duce is beginning seriously to lose faith in Badoglio. He has given me orders to keep my

eye on him carefully and to find out what he really says to the Germans in his coming meeting with Keitel at Innsbruck.

Mussolini read me the speech which he will deliver to the leaders of the Party on November 18th. It is good, but contains nothing new or different. I shall be absent, because on that day I shall be at a meeting with Hitler; Serrano Suñer will also be present.

NOVEMBER 14, 1940. Antonescu and Sturdza<sup>226</sup> arrive. My impressions of the former are fair. As to the second, he isn't even worth talking about. Mussolini has called him "one of those who perform Russian dances".

The interview at the Palazzo Venezia is rather dull. Antonescu makes a very strong attack on the decision at Vienna, and says that the verdict was given on the basis of a coloured sheet of paper printed by the Hungarians. If the colours had been reversed the verdict would have been favourable to the Rumanians. I did not want to go on arguing, but I must confess that he was not very courteous in speaking with one of the two arbiters.

Farinacci tells me that Mussolini, in speaking of the Greek affair, told him that "even Count Ciano has given him inexact information", and then, speaking of the Fascist Party, that "Count Ciano had made a present of Muti to the Party". Farinacci said that he protested vigorously. I shall only answer that I had the same information as Mussolini about Albania, and as regards Muti it is timely to recall that from January 1st onwards I constantly denounced his incapacity and advised that he should be replaced at once.

NOVEMBER 15, 1940. It seems that the Greeks have resumed their attack all along the front, and with considerable forces. Up to now we have resisted very well. This is also confirmed by a letter from Starace, which, with all its realism, is not pessimistic. Above all, he blames Visconti Prasca, who had too lightly asserted that everything was ready to the last detail, when, as a matter of fact, the organization of our forces was altogether defective.

The King does not like coloured shirts very much, whatever

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<sup>226</sup> Prince Luca Sturdza: Rumanian diplomat.

their shade. Yesterday, at the court, he told me: "These Rumanians in their green shirts are really ridiculous. They remind me of the hotel porters in old Russia."

In the evening the news from Albania is more serious. Pressure continues, and resistance is more difficult. And then we lack guns, while the Greek artillery is modern and well handled.

Under the circumstances, Comrade de Vecchi is thinking seriously of offering his resignation as Governor of the *Ægean*, and yet he was one of the most active, in fact the most active, inciter of Mussolini in the war against Greece. But now that he realizes the time has arrived for the rats to scuttle he wants to be the first to land.

NOVEMBER 16, 1940. We are putting up a strong resistance in Albania.

Departure of the Rumanians, who, on the whole, have not made a deep impression.

NOVEMBER 17, 1940. I leave for Salzburg. News from Albania is uncertain; an eventual withdrawal is not to be excluded.

NOVEMBER 18, 1940. A rather enigmatic Ribbentrop meets me in Salzburg. Before lunch, in his house at Fuschl, he decides to announce that Hitler will speak on the situation created by the Greek crisis. The Germans are gloomy, and it is not difficult to understand why. I had lunch with Serrano and Ribbentrop. Serrano is outspoken. He chats away with a freedom the Germans don't like, criticizing especially the German effort to reach an understanding with the French. He thinks this understanding is difficult, and he doesn't believe that Laval is the right man to bring it about.

In the afternoon I saw Hitler at the Berghof. A long tea with Serrano and the others, and then a personal conversation with Hitler, Ribbentrop, and an interpreter. I outlined the conversation in a letter to the Duce. There was a heavy atmosphere. Hitler is pessimistic and considers the situation much compromised by what has happened in the Balkans. His criticism is open, definite, and final. I try to talk to him, but he does not allow me to proceed. Only in the second part of the conversation, that is, after Hitler gave his consent to eventual

negotiations with Yugoslavia, does he become warm and cordial, at times almost friendly. The idea of an alliance with Yugoslavia excites him to the point that, while his pessimism at first appeared too black, now his optimism seems too rosy. He tells me some secrets: that Horthy urged him even at the time of his visit to Italy to raise the question of Trieste, that is, he wanted to launch Hungarian nationalistic pretensions to Fiume. (Can I believe all this?) "For the moment," Hitler added, "it is necessary to dissemble with the Hungarians, as we need their railways. But the moment will come when we shall speak clearly." (However much he dissembles, the Hungarians know his ideas very well.) From the hotel I write a long letter to the Duce. I lay emphasis on the Yugoslav affair, because I am convinced that it will be very much to the liking of the Germans at this moment. I believe that Mussolini will raise strong objections, at least he will refuse all military help in the matter before he has taken his revenge on the Greeks.

Alternating news of defeats and victories on the Albanian front. I fear that we shall have to withdraw to a pre-established line. The loss of Corcia is certainly not the loss of Paris, but it will serve to give a name to the battle and help the enemy to beat the drums of propaganda against Italy. This is why I hope that we may hold on to Corcia.

On my way to Vienna by train.

NOVEMBER 20, 1940. Signature of Hungary's adherence. Rumanian and Slovakian adherences will follow. I do not attach much importance to the adherence of these States, which are vassals of Germany, or almost so. In fact, they weaken the Tripartite Agreement itself, and seem to be useless bits of ersatz diplomacy. In Germany they talked too much about everything being finished by October, and in fact the Viennese people, who always have their witticisms ready, said: "They were right: oil, butter, and meat are finished." Austrian morale is low.

A few not very interesting words with the Hungarians.

Again a conference with Hitler. He speaks exclusively of Yugoslavia and is satisfied that the Duce has, in principle, given his consent. He plans to call the Regent Paul to Berlin and to propose the alliance to him. He is disposed to favour the

accession of Paul himself to the throne. His wife is ambitious. This seems difficult to me. Paul is not enough of a Serb in spirit and ways to be loved by his people. At the end, Hitler has one of his characteristic emotional outbursts. "From this city of Vienna, on the day of the Anschluss, I sent Mussolini a telegram to assure him that I would never forget his help. I confirm it to-day, and I am at his side with all my strength." He had two big tears in his eyes. What a strange man! He hands me a sealed letter.

NOVEMBER 21, 1940. Hitler's letter to the Duce is in the same tone as the first part of the conference—critical and full of anxiety. I expected a violent reaction from Mussolini. Instead, there is nothing. He does not seem to attribute any importance to a document which, in fact, has a great deal. I find the Duce calm, decided, not worried. What is happening in Albania saddens but does not disturb him. He is critical of our military men, of Badoglio, and announces imminent changes in the army command.

During the evening Soddu announces that he intends to abandon Corcia and withdraw on the entire front. And yet the Greek pressure seems to be less. Mussolini intervenes to get him to reconsider, but the machine is in motion and it cannot be stopped now.

NOVEMBER 22, 1940. Mussolini is preparing his answer to Hitler's letter—on re-reading it he had realized its full import. "He really smacked my fingers," he concludes. The answer is brief and calm. He accepts Hitler's political and military proposals.

Pavolini recounts confidentially that Badoglio said to him: "There is no doubt that Jacomoni and Visconti Prasca have a large share of the responsibility in the Albanian affair, but the real blame must be sought elsewhere. It lies entirely with the Duce's command. This is a command that he, the Duce, cannot hold. Let him leave everything to us, and when things go wrong let him punish those responsible." Pavolini dutifully informed the Duce about it. The Duce's reaction was like a flash. He called Badoglio names like "enemy of the regime" and "traitor", which are strong epithets for him to use about his own Chief-of-Staff in war-time.

NOVEMBER 23, 1940. Sebastiani revealed to me this morning that the Duce is studying the Army List in order to find substitutes for Badoglio and Soddu. His eye seems to have rested on the names of Pintor and Orlando, the latter being an unknown. Mussolini himself said nothing to me about it. In any case, even if he asks me, I intend to keep out of it, since I know little about military affairs. Personally, I like Messe, and I recall that my father thought well of Gazzera<sup>227</sup>.

In the Regime Fascista Farinacci makes an open attack on Badoglio, thereby precipitating a crisis.

I had a brief telephone conversation with Ribbentrop. Hitler has not yet examined the Duce's letter, and therefore can make no reply. I shall talk to him again to-morrow. News from Albania is of an orderly retreat without pressure from the enemy.

NOVEMBER 24, 1940. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 25, 1940. Soddu confirms the better news from Albania. He considers that the forces under him are sufficient to guarantee a stabilization of the line. The Badoglio crisis is out in the open. Badoglio calls for a retraction from Farinacci, couched in such terms that I am certain the latter will dynamite his newspaper's rotary press rather than accept. Badoglio insists that if a denial is not published he is going to leave. Mussolini now desires to get rid of him. He goes slowly, because this is his nature in such matters, and because he wants to let time take its course. He speaks about Pintor and Gazzera.

NOVEMBER 26, 1940. Badoglio, after seeing the Duce, has handed in his letter of resignation. Farinacci persists in his refusal to publish a retraction. We cannot go on in this way. When we add to this that Badoglio was confronted with Pavolini's written statement, we begin to see how things are going. To-day the ushers at the doors of the Palazzo Venezia were given instructions to show leading Italians into different rooms, in order to prevent a general brawl.

NOVEMBER 27, 1940. The General Staff crisis continues. Mussolini has accepted in principle the resignation of Badoglio, but he must yet overcome some last-minute uncertainties. He

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<sup>227</sup> General Pietro Gazzera: Governor of Galla and Bidama Gimma, Italian East Africa.

wants to draw up a dispatch in which it is said that "Badoglio has submitted his resignation for reasons of health and age". This formula does not suit Badoglio, but Mussolini insists, for in this way he intends to nip in the bud the candidacy of "that roguish old madman, General de Bono". Meanwhile Badoglio has retired, not to his tent, but to the villa of his friend Necchi in the vicinity of Milan. Nevertheless, this is a situation that cannot go on.

From Albania the news from Soddu indicates progressive improvement. News from Starace, on the other hand, is not very optimistic, since he still feels that our fate is hanging by a thread.

I see de Vecchi. He speaks with less logic than usual, and cannot explain his resignation.

He would really like to leave, but knows he will cut a bad figure. Notwithstanding his incomparable conceit, he is ashamed, but not to the point of refraining from applying for another post at the same time.

NOVEMBER 28, 1940. Conference between de Vecchi and Mussolini, which ends in no decision. De Vecchi said that "he is ready to serve elsewhere, but that he expects lots of chevrons on his sleeve". The Duce did not respond.

Bad news from Albania. Greek pressure continues, but above all our resistance is growing weak. If the Greeks had strength enough to penetrate our lines we might yet have a great deal of trouble.

NOVEMBER 29, 1940. The Duce has appointed Guzzoni Under-Secretary of War and Assistant Chief of the General Staff. In general, this appointment is well received.

Starace, who has just come from Albania, sees things in pretty dark colours, and passes severe judgment on the behaviour of our troops. Our soldiers have fought but little, and badly. This is the real, fundamental cause of all that has happened.

NOVEMBER 30, 1940. Meeting of the Council of Ministers. The Duce talks at length about the situation. He reads the principal documents and, while personally assuming responsibility for the political decisions, he directs some hard blows at Badoglio as regards military action. The Duce's thesis is this: Badoglio was not only in agreement, but even over-



enthusiastic. The political side of the question was handled perfectly; military action was entirely inadequate. He did not conceal the gravity of the situation, that is the imminent retreat to the south and the enemy's attack now going on in the Pogradec zone. "The situation is serious," said the Duce. "It might even become tragic." In the Council of Ministers there was a genuine revulsion against de Vecchi when the Duce mentioned his name and read the telegrams in which he had spurred him on to the attack on Greece.

The Duce called in General Cavallero, and this indicates his intentions. Cavallero is an optimist who does not believe in the possibility of a defeat in Albania, having full faith in our ability to take the offensive once more. I record everything but guarantee nothing. I am becoming more and more cautious in military matters. The Duce does not mention any appointments or jobs to General Cavallero. He listens to him at length, and invites him to another meeting to-morrow. In the meantime, Badoglio continues to shoot pheasants.

DECEMBER 1, 1940. News from Albania has improved. We are holding and even counter-attacking in the north, while in the south the withdrawal continues without enemy pressure. In his conversation with Cavallero the Duce tells him about his impending appointment as Chief of the General Staff. It is still impending because delayed until Badoglio returns to Rome.

We have indirect news of German-Yugoslav negotiations. Nothing has been communicated to us, although they are discussing matters which concern us.

I can't say that the Germans are very tactful with us.

DECEMBER 2, 1940. Nothing worth mentioning. A discussion with the Nuncio about the abolition of holidays on New Year's Day, Epiphany, and St. Joseph's Day. This is the Duce's bright idea and he is very proud of it. At my insistence he relented as to the celebration of St. Joseph's Day, but he holds firm on the other two holidays, and especially on New Year's Day, "since it is no other than the day of the circumcision of Christ, that is, the celebration of a Hebrew rite, which the Church itself has abolished". I wonder whether, in times like these, it is worth while irritating the people with whims of this sort.

DECEMBER 3, 1940. Greek pressure has started again on the Albanian front, and it seems that the 11th Army must now make that withdrawal from Argirocastro and Port Edda which we had hoped to avoid.

DECEMBER 4, 1940. Sorice<sup>228</sup> telephones at an early hour that we have lost Pogradec and that the Greeks have broken through our lines. Then he informs us that Soddu now thinks that "any military action has become impossible and the situation must be settled through political intervention". Mussolini calls me to the Palazzo Venezia. I find him discouraged as never before. He says: "There is nothing else to do. This is grotesque and absurd, but it is a fact. We have to ask for a truce through Hitler." This is impossible. The Greeks will, as a first condition, ask for the Führer's personal guarantee that nothing will ever be done against them again.

I would rather put a bullet through my head than telephone Ribbentrop. Is it possible that we are defeated? May it not be that the commander has laid down his arms before his men? I am in no position to give military suggestions, but rigorous logic tells me that if a rout has not already started it is still possible to form a bridgehead at Valona and, with fresh forces, a safety line on the river Skumbini. What counts now is to resist, and to stick to Albania. Time will bring victory, but if we give up it is the end. Mussolini listens to me and decides to make a fresh attempt. He sends Cavallero to the front. Later, he has a new attack of discouragement and says: "Every man must make one fatal error in his life. And I made mine when I believed General Visconti Prasca. But how could I have avoided it when this man seemed so sure of himself and so full of confidence? The human material I have to work with is useless, worthless."

The idea strikes me that I can perhaps verify the situation through Jacomoni, and I telephone to him. I immediately get the impression that in Tirana they are more at ease than in Rome. I fear that some misunderstanding lurks in the air. In fact, Jacomoni says that "as a political solution, Soddu had intended a military diversion on the Greek flank, such as would

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<sup>228</sup> Brigadier-General Antonio Sorice: Italian Chief of Staff, 1940. Fought in Greek Campaign. Under-Secretary of War, 1943. Minister of War in Badoglio Cabinet. Member of the State Council.

be produced by a German or Yugoslav intervention". News from the High Command also improved during the day, and Soddu and Cavallero leave for Elbasan to study the situation on the spot.

During the evening I see the Duce again. He was more relieved. He has had a talk with Badoglio, who meant to withdraw his resignation. Too late. Mussolini asserts that the King himself encouraged him to accept it, saying that, "in his opinion, Badoglio is now too tired".

DECEMBER 5, 1940. News from Albania indicates that the situation is unchanged. The time gained is entirely in our favour, the more so since the Germans have given us fifty transport planes. In this way traffic is facilitated.

De Vecchi's resignation has also been accepted, and he will be replaced by Bastico.<sup>229</sup> The Duce intends to replace Admiral Cavagnari by Admiral Riccardi. My father's opinion of the latter was not very high.

I succeed in persuading the Duce to restore the New Year and Epiphany holidays. I inform the Nuncio of it. It was not worth while to create a crisis with the Vatican in times like these.

DECEMBER 6, 1940. News from Albania unchanged.

Conference with Marshal Milch,<sup>230</sup> who has come to Rome to settle the question of the Stukas for operation in the Mediterranean. He was calm and optimistic about the situation in general, as well as about the Greek question. Hitler's letter, of which he was the bearer, also differs substantially in content and in form from the one sent from Vienna. The Albanian affair is minimized, considered certain of solution, an episode in the great picture in which the prospects are good. All this has greatly relieved Mussolini, who passes on to a counter-attack, even about internal matters. "If, when I was a Socialist," he said, "I had had a knowledge of the Italian middle class, not purely theoretical from reading Karl Marx, but practical, based on experience such as I have now, I would have launched a revolution so pitiless that, by comparison, the revolution of Comrade Lenin would have been child's play."

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<sup>229</sup> General Ettore Bastico: Fought in Libyan, Yugoslav and Greek campaigns. Appointed Governor of the Aegean.

<sup>230</sup> Field Marshal Erhard Milch: Chief of Nazi Air Staff, 1938. Chairman Lufthansa. Arrested by Allies, 1945

Cavallero has been appointed Chief of the General Staff. Repercussions are not good, especially in military circles. The man is much discussed. Opinions vary, but no one says that he is stupid.

DECEMBER 7, 1940. A speech by Zvetkovic<sup>231</sup> marks the beginning of a manœuvre for a change of policy in Yugoslavia. Stackic also announces that he will soon visit Italy and will be followed shortly by Antic, Minister of the Court. In a conference with Christic I stressed our good intentions towards his country, and alluded to the Slav character of the Vardar Valley. Mussolini is calm and as firm as a rock. Now that he has removed de Vecchi he is glad he has done it. He put in the dispatch the words "at his request", in order to make it clear to all concerned that "at the time when these men should have made a request to re-enter the ranks of the Fascists, they have asked to leave them".

Cavallero returns from Albania. He still considers the situation critical but on the way to a solution. Within a week our lines, which still suffer from slight oscillations, will be definitely stabilized. Within a short time he is thinking of making a local counter-attack that would again assure us the possession of Corcia, which, from the point of view of prestige, would be a great thing. News from Greece confirms reports that the situation is serious.

DECEMBER 8, 1940. Nothing new.

DECEMBER 9, 1940. The Fascist Party has launched a counter-attack against Badoglio which is probably exaggerated, as it even speaks of treason. Serena has told me about it and explained his motives. I do not entirely agree. Every exaggeration backfires because it touches on the honour of the Army itself. In fact, Badoglio went to protest to the Duce and obtained a rather friendly reply.

DECEMBER 10, 1940. News of the attack on Sidi Barrani comes like a thunderbolt. At first it doesn't seem serious, but subsequent telegrams from Graziani confirm that we have had a licking. Mussolini, whom I see twice, is very calm. He comments on the event with impersonal objectivity.

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<sup>231</sup> Dragisha Zvetkovic: Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, 1939-41.

It almost seems that what has happened doesn't concern him in the least, he being more preoccupied with Graziani's prestige, and disposed not to recognize the seriousness of what has happened. But it is serious, at home and abroad. It is serious outside Italy because from the tone of Graziani's telegrams it does not appear that he has sufficiently recovered from the blow to prepare a counter-attack. Inside Italy, because it makes a bad situation worse, public opinion had already been shaken and too much divided to receive this new and heavy blow calmly.

Hitler's speech did not make a good impression. It is more defensive than offensive, and one feels that Italy plays a very secondary role.

DECEMBER 11, 1940. Things are really going badly in Libya. Four divisions can be considered destroyed, and Graziani, who reports on the spirit and decision of the enemy, says nothing about what he can do to parry the blow. Mussolini becomes more and more calm. He maintains that the many painful days through which we are living must be considered inevitable in the changing fortunes of every war. He still hopes that Graziani can and will stop the British advance. If it can be stopped at the old boundary, the situation will not be serious, he thinks; if the British should reach Tobruk, then he thinks the situation would verge on the tragic.

During the evening news arrives that the Catanzaro division did not hold against the English push but was itself torn to pieces. Something is the matter with our Army if five divisions allow themselves to be pulverized in two days.

DECEMBER 12, 1940. We are easing up in Albania. Doing poorly in Libya. Graziani telegraphs little news and gives no details. He has not yet recovered from the blow he has suffered, and, besides, it seems that his nerves are quite shaken since the time of the attempt on his life in Addis Ababa. They tell me that even in Italy he was so much afraid of attempts on his life that he had his village at Arciruzzo guarded by at least eighteen carabinieri. In Libya he had a refuge built in a Roman tomb at Cyrene, sixty or seventy feet deep. Now he is upset and cannot make decisions. He pins his hopes on the possible exhaustion of the adversary, and not on his own

strength, which is a bad sign. The Duce now feels the gravity of events. "In Libya we have suffered a real defeat. This time it will not be said that politics is to blame. I have left the military authorities the most ample freedom of action. To-day the King is very gloomy."

I have seen von Mackensen. He came on a pretext. Naturally we spoke of the situation, and I did not conceal how matters stand. He has shown solidarity and comprehension. Ansaldo reports that von Ribbentrop has done the same in a conference he had with him in Berlin. During the evening Sebastiani suggests that I should go to the Palazzo Venezia. A catastrophic telegram has arrived from Graziani, a mixture of excitement, rhetoric, and concern. He is thinking of withdrawing to Tripoli, "in order to keep the flag flying on that fortress at least", but he is inclined to make accusations against Rommel, that is, Mussolini, for having obliged him to wage the war "of the flea against the elephant".

I visit Mussolini and find him very much shaken. I have nothing to tell him, but desire only by my presence to give him to understand that I am more than ever with him. He realizes how the country will feel the blow. He listens to my suggestion about doing something to raise the morale of the people. We must speak to the hearts of the Italians. We must make them understand that what is at stake in the game is not Fascism—it is our country, our eternal country, the country of all of us, which is above men and times and factions.

DECEMBER 13, 1940. The morning news seems better, and the Duce is relieved. For my part I am sceptical, since the force of the attack and the feeble resistance of the troops do not give us grounds for hope. I do not at all believe, as the Duce does, that the English will be content to eject us from Egypt and stop at the frontier. They have more far-reaching objectives.

DECEMBER 14, 1940. News from Libya seems to improve. Graziani sends fewer telegrams and is not so gloomy as before. Soddu continues to send disturbing reports from Albania, while Cavallero's telephone calls are quite serene. Mussolini says "Five generals are prisoners and one is dead. This is the ratio of Italians who have military qualities and those who have none. In the future we shall create an army of professionals,

selecting them out of the twelve or thirteen million Italians in the valley of the Po and in regions of central Italy. All the others will be put to work making arms for the warrior aristocracy."

During the evening bad news again. While I am dining at the German Embassy the Duce telephones to inquire about a crisis in the French Government. The Germans don't seem too concerned about it. Their attitude towards us is grim. In German eyes we are not yet guilty; but we are under suspicion.

DECEMBER 15, 1940. I find the Duce calm but indignant towards Graziani because of a long telegram of recrimination in which he talks "as man to man" and scolds the Duce for having permitted himself to be betrayed by his Roman military collaborators, for never having listened to him, and for having pushed him into an impossible adventure. Mussolini reads it to me and says: "Here is another man with whom I cannot get angry, because I despise him." The Duce still believes that the British advance can be stopped at the approaches to Derna.

In Albania also there was a retreat, which Cavallero considers not to be serious and of purely strategic value to the enemy. He believes that his reserves are sufficient to stop the breakthrough.

I receive Marchesa Graziani. She is beside herself. She has received a letter from her husband containing his will, and in it he says that "one cannot break steel armour with finger-nails alone". He asks for a mass intervention by German aircraft in Libya, which might still change the present rout into a victory. Even if this idea were taken into account, would the Germans risk sending their planes on such short notice without time to prepare for replacements and transport? I don't think so. The only thing that is certain is that Marshal Graziani has lost his nerve.

DECEMBER 16, 1940. A lull in Albania and in Libya, where, however, the enemy is massing for an attack on Bardia. A meeting with the Duce concerning the request to Germany for raw materials. The sad story begins. We are not asking for too much, but it is always hard to ask for anything, especially so at this moment.

DECEMBER 17, 1940. Again a bad withdrawal in

Albania towards Clisura and Tepeleni. The Duce has prepared a letter, a harsh letter, to Cavallero, with an order to the troops to die at their posts. "More than an order from me," he wrote, "it is an order from our country." Let us hope that this lash will have its effect.

In the city the rumour has spread of a great Italian victory with tens of thousands of prisoners and hundreds of tanks destroyed. In a flash the rumour has swept the country. There is no truth in it. It is a manoeuvre, cunning and base, to break down our morale. They tell me that after Caporetto, too, the same thing happened, and that the country was inflamed by the hopes aroused by false news and was then plunged into an even gloomier desolation. Anticipation of the war of nerves.

DECEMBER 18, 1940. I confer at length with Cavallero, who has returned from Albania. He is distinctly optimistic. He not only thinks that a notable surprise is possible, but he also believes that the critical phase is almost over, and he is planning to strike the first offensive blow at Clisura the day after tomorrow. This is to be followed by another in the Tomorizza Valley. He thinks that by February 1st he will have completed preparations for an offensive that should bring us to Corcia; from there on he will press the offensive as rapidly as possible. Being in this mood, he attaches little importance to the vicissitudes that our lines have suffered in the last few days.

Little news from Libya, where English forces continue to press us around Bardia. Nevertheless, its means of defence are such that if Bergonzoli<sup>232</sup> holds firm the English will not have an easy task.

I received the National Council of the Ex-Service Men's Association and addressed them. It does not take many words to kindle the faith that is in the hearts of all Italians, and which only awaits an occasion to express itself.

DECEMBER 19, 1940. I cannot say that what has happened has proved Cavallero right. The Siena division, which was covering the coastal area, was broken to pieces by a Greek attack. The position is dangerous. Once they enter the

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<sup>232</sup> General Annibale Bergonzoli: Called "Electric whiskers". Served in North African campaign. Captured wounded by the British early in 1941. Transferred to India in May, 1941.



valley of Sciuscizza the march on Valona is easy and natural, and it is not difficult to see how heavy a loss the fall of Valona would be. Mussolini is irritated because he feels that our forces are not fighting back and that the morale of their officers is low. To this must be added the fact that when Soddu talks to the Duce he says one thing, and when he talks to Sorice he says another. For him, the important theatre of operations is not the Greek Front, but the Palazzo Venezia.

DECEMBER 20, 1940. Jealousies among generals are worse than among women. Soddu's telephone conversations with Sorice are worth hearing. He demolishes all the generals. Geloso has softening of the brain, Perugi is a disaster, Trionfi is bankrupt. To-day, for some unknown reason, he speaks well of Vercellino, saying: "Poor Vercellino. He is such a dear. He came to see me and he wept."

The Duce has prepared a message for Hitler. He presents things as they are and asks for German intervention in Thrace through Bulgaria. I don't think that Hitler can do this before March. In any case, the message will not be sent immediately. The Duce awaits Cavallero's report and probably also the results of our counter-attack at Tepeleni, where two fresh divisions have arrived, the Cuneo and the Acqui.

Churchill has made another speech. It is, naturally, hard on us, for he says cruel things as to the value of our forces in Libya, where the situation continues to be serious. It is an able speech, in which many hints can be read between the lines.

DECEMBER 21, 1940. Nothing new or noteworthy on the two fronts.

Mussolini, who feels a little better, has a long conversation with the military attaché, Marras, in my presence. It deals with eventual German military help. Marras comes to these conclusions: (1) before March Hitler can engage in no action in Thrace; (2) it is useless to ask for German troops in Valona, because they could not arrive within a month; (3) they might consider sending two armoured divisions to Libya. The Duce is in agreement on these points.

DECEMBER 22, 1940. Cavallero, who is the type of man who always sounds the optimistic note, says that the counter-attack on the coast line will be mounted to-morrow or the day

after. We do not expect great results, but hope to lessen pressure on Valona. This would be a success, because Valona represents a strategic objective of the first order for the Greeks and the English, and also because we shall recover the initiative.

DECEMBER 23, 1940. Nothing new, but I find the Duce rather irritated over Saturday's withdrawal, contrary to the expectations of Cavallero. Instead of lessening, the pressure on Valona is now increasing. The Duce no longer believes what Cavallero says. "These generals have become," Mussolini said, "like those country innkeepers who paint a cock on the wall and under it write 'When this cock begins to crow, on you credit I'll bestow'. I, too, will grant the military credit when they prove by some action that the situation has changed." Then, speaking of the rather indifferent behaviour of our troops, he added: "I must nevertheless recognize that the Italians of 1914 were better than these. It is not flattering for the regime, but that's how it is".

DECEMBER 24, 1940. It is snowing. The Duce looks out of the window and is glad that it is snowing. "This snow and cold are very good," he says. "In this way our good-for-nothing Italians, this mediocre race, will be improved. One of the principal reasons I have desired the reforestation of the Apennines has been to make Italy colder and snowier".

A long conference with Melchiori, who has come from Cyrenaica. He is Graziani's liaison officer, hence pretty much in the thick of things. In his opinion the situation has clearly grown better, and we shall no longer have any sudden surprises. Graziani openly accuses Badoglio of treachery, and says that even in his gloomiest hours the only thing that prevented him from committing suicide was his strong desire to drag Badoglio one day into the dock.

DECEMBER 25, 1940. Christmas. The Duce is sombre, and speaks again about the situation in Albania. He appears more tired than usual, and this saddens me very much. The Duce's energy at this time is our greatest resource. He no longer believes in Cavallero. He says that his optimism is like that of one whistling in the dark. In fact, Cavallero reports from Tirana that "the height of the crisis has been passed, and now there is a complete change of spirit in the troops."

DECEMBER 26, 1940. Nothing new.

DECEMBER 27, 1940. The usual story in Albania, and this displeases the Duce. He is right. Notwithstanding Cavallero's bright words one cannot read the situation clearly. He promises this offensive of the valley of Sciuscizza, but it does not take place, and we would not be surprised if once again the Greeks should launch theirs first.

DECEMBER 28, 1940. Nothing new.

DECEMBER 29, 1940. I went to Cortellazzo for the inauguration of the village dedicated to my father. A simple and brief ceremony.

In Venice I saw little and can say little about how the people feel. Some degrees below freezing, and the lagoons are covered with ice; such being the case, the Venetians are unwilling to interest themselves in politics.

DECEMBER 30, 1940. During my absence the Duce conferred the command of the armed forces on Cavallero, and took it away from Soddu. For some time he had been dissatisfied with Soddu's temperamental changes of humour. One day all rosy, and another all black. The final blow came when the Duce learned that Soddu, even in Albania, was devoting his evening hours to composing music for the films.

DECEMBER 31, 1940. Cavallero transmits a copy of a letter addressed to the Duce, in which he asks his permission for an offensive action in grand style along the coast. It is like inviting the hare to run. No one gnaws his lips more than the Duce because of this interminable defensive that day after day forces him to swallow bitter pills.

Parini at the Palazzo Venezia. He speaks of what the Party is doing for the troops. His hopes for the future are rather bright, but he is very severe about the past.

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JANUARY 1, 1941. The year has begun with great anxiety about my mother's health. A heart attack put her dear life in danger. Then she improved, but all this has left me in great anxiety.

The Duce has received a long letter from Hitler; it contains a full survey of the situation. The Führer is serene about the future prospects of the war, but he thinks that many decisions are still necessary and he enumerates them with his usual precision.

I write to Alfieri to acquaint him with our negotiations with Russia, and to inform Ribbentrop also. These are no longer at the stage of broad, superficial conversations; the Russians wish to probe many fundamental and important questions, on which I would consider it imprudent for us to commit ourselves without first having agreed with the Germans.

Cavallero announces his attack along the coast as imminent.

JANUARY 2, 1941. News from Hungary leads us to believe that internal conditions in Greece are serious. The Greek military attaché to Budapest is himself supposed to have said that there is very little his country can do now. On the other hand, Bulgaria seems to have decided to align herself with the Axis. Filof<sup>233</sup> will soon go to confer with the Germans.

JANUARY 3, 1941. Prince Hesse asks, on behalf of Hitler, what are the Duce's feelings towards the Führer, since the military have created the impression in Germany that the Duce is showing some coolness. I replied that never before has the Duce been more grateful to Hitler for his solidarity and for his friendship—a reply that is entirely truthful.

During the conversation with Hesse, Guzzoni telephones, saying that a British attack on Bardia makes the situation there extremely precarious. This is painful, but it should not surprise us. To suppose that, after its initial success, the British attack could be exhausted was, in my opinion, comforting but very erroneous.

I inform Mackensen, who is going to Berlin, about our negotiations with Moscow.

JANUARY 4, 1941. A meeting of the Council of Ministers. The Duce makes a long recital of the military situation in Libya as well as in Albania; the first rather sombre, the second somewhat optimistic. In reality, the attack on Bardia seems to

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<sup>233</sup> Professor Filof: Premier, later one of the Regents, of Bulgaria. Disappeared early in 1944, arrested by the Russians in September, 1944. Handed over to Bulgarian authorities for trial, January 1945.

have fully succeeded, for only two hours after the fighting began Bergonzoli considered the situation of the stronghold very critical. The Duce read all the documents, including Graziani's telegrams written "during the time that this man had lost his senses, or at least his mind". He is very hard on all the Marshals, except Pecori Giraldi, for whom he has great respect. He confines himself to mentioning de Bono, adding quickly afterwards: "I want you to note that I have said nothing about him. On the whole he seems to be staunch and hopeful. Later on there will be another day of reckoning, the most formidable of all, which will upset institutions and men who have revealed their real nature in this hour. I am now quietly preparing lists of their names".

Grandi is displeased and terrified because of a letter sent him by Farinacci, who invites him to come out in the open and drop his self-imposed equivocal reserve.

JANUARY 5, 1941. Ever since 4 p.m. yesterday the Bardia radio has been silent. We know what transpires only from the British communiqués. The resistance of our troops was brief—a matter of hours. And yet there was no lack of arms. The guns alone numbered four hundred and thirty. Why didn't the fight continue longer? Is this still a case of the flea against the elephant? "A peculiar flea," says Mussolini, "one that between Sidi el Barrani, Bardia, and Tobruk had at its disposal more than a thousand guns. One day I shall decide to open the dykes and tell the whole truth to the Italians, who have been befuddled by too many lies. After my speech of January 3rd I shall speak again on February 3rd—one of those speeches that draw blood. I am waiting only until Cavallero succeeds in striking a first blow at the Greeks, then I shall speak."

During the evening news arrives that Bardia, though cut in two, is still resisting. For how long? It would be important if we could wear out the British and prevent their carrying out more ambitious projects, which their recent successes might very well have inspired.

I telegraphed Alfieri for a Hitler-Mussolini meeting somewhere between the 12th and the 19th. Up to this point Mussolini has procrastinated. He does not want to meet Hitler

burdened by these numerous failures, until they have been at least in part redressed.

JANUARY 6, 1941. After a long time I again saw the King, who was preoccupied and shaken by the situation in Libya. He does not believe that the forces arrayed at Tobruk and on the approaches to Derna are sufficient to stop the British advance. He is doubtful about Germany. And even when I talk to him about Hitler's perfectly loyal attitude towards us he is sceptical. "He has treated you courteously only because he had to and could not do otherwise," he said. "But he is a German like the others, and will deal with Italy only on the basis of brutal self-interest. Nor do I believe that Hitler has the power to do anything he wishes. Militarism is strong in Germany, and even Bismarck, who had a really good head on him, had to submit to it." Then he went on to criticize our military organization. "For too long a time a chair has been called a palace in Italy," he said; "but this does not change the fact that a chair remains a chair. Thus it happens that our divisions, small and unarmed, are divisions in name only." Then he mentioned an eventual British landing in Italy, which explains why he is against any excessive weakening of the home front. In spite of all this he maintains that the war will end in a German victory, because Hitler has unified the European continent against England.

JANUARY 7, 1941. The fall of Bardia has again shaken public morale. The internal situation becomes grim. "It will take at least a week for this washing to dry," Mussolini said. In the meeting of the Council of Ministers the Duce surveyed the situation without comment, soberly, fearlessly, with a calm which in these days seems really superhuman. He read the list of the generals and colonels who have been replaced in the course of recent weeks because of their lack of human or professional value, deducing from this many bitter judgments on the Army and on its personnel. Finally, he proposed an order of the day, which was approved by unanimous vote. The last phrase is significant: an appeal to the Italian masses, "proletarian and Fascist". The hostile and complaining middle class is playing a dangerous game. It does not know Mussolini and is not aware that he can take a great deal of punishment,

and be capable at the same time of harbouring deep resentment. If he wins, in fact *when* he wins, the obstructionist bourgeoisie will have to deal with the old Socialist from Romagna it has succeeded in awakening.

Cavallero confirms his decision to attack soon, maybe tomorrow. It will be a limited attack, but one which in these times would have great moral value.

JANUARY 10, 1941. In my presence the Duce received the German Ambassador, who has just come from Hitler with a message regarding the date of a meeting between the Führer and the Duce. It is decided for Sunday, the 19th, at Berchtesgaden. Mussolini is in excellent humour because the air and naval battle, now in progress in the Sicilian channel, is going very well. A British aircraft carrier and two destroyers are in flames. And this is not the end of it. The Duce says: "At last the moon has changed." He speaks of the necessity of always telling the people the truth, in the first place in order to raise morale, and secondly to win their confidence. "The people must know that life is a serious thing, and that war is the most serious thing in life."

JANUARY 11, 1941. Yesterday evening's news of the air and sea battle was perhaps exaggerated. We cannot as yet establish whether the British carrier has been sunk or not. On the other hand, from Cavallero we are not getting very good news on the course of affairs in Albania. Clisura is lost. In itself this means nothing. It is a mass of huts in a more or less dilapidated condition, but it is a name, and Anglo-Greek propaganda is already sounding all the trumpets of the press and radio. It also proves that the wall of resistance, that famous wall which we have been awaiting for seventy days, has not yet been formed. Our troops, even the fresh ones, hold out until Greek pressure starts, but they yield ground rapidly under attack. Why? Mussolini finds that the entire situation is an inexplicable drama, so much the more serious because it is inexplicable. Cavallero, with whom I have spoken by telephone, does not hide the gravity of what has happened, but he does not feel that the situation at Berat, and therefore at Valona, has been compromised. He continues to speak of the famous attack along the coast, but of this, however, we see no concrete evidence.

JANUARY 12, 1941. Nothing new.

JANUARY 13, 1941. To-morrow morning Mussolini is going to Foggia to meet the generals from Albania. He considers the moment has come to make some decision, especially because Guzzoni is very insistent that the offensive should take place along the coast. He thinks that this will have the effect of exploding the Greek plans for an offensive and even of bringing us back to the old frontier.

Movement begins in Bulgaria. The nearness of the German troops already gives the impression that the tempo of events is about to quicken. Magistrati feels that Bulgaria will not openly array herself with the Axis but will allow herself to be invaded without much opposition even of a perfunctory character.

JANUARY 14, 1941. Nothing new. I conferred with von Mackensen to arrange the Duce's visit to Berchtesgaden.

Alfieri, in a very secret letter, informs me that the campaign against me of the last few weeks has had certain repercussions, though now it is all over, he says, even in Germany. This does not surprise me. The Germans have an old resentment for my non-belligerency, and, even when they try to save appearances, they cannot entirely conceal this resentment. This is true especially of Ribbentrop. Ever since Salzburg, in 1939, our relations have changed, and my bet with Joachim on Anglo-French intervention is completely forgotten. I made the mistake of being right. Useless for them to split hairs about whether or not I was for the war with Greece; one thing is certain—I wanted no war at all.

JANUARY 15, 1941. No important news.

JANUARY 16, 1941. During the morning I had a meeting with the King; in the afternoon another with the Duce. The King, who maintains an attitude which is more than cordial towards me, said that, with the German descent into Thrace, he considers the end of the Greek affair imminent. On the other hand, he considers the situation in Libya grave, and thinks that the defence of Tobruk is a very serious mistake. It will have no practical results, and will only further weaken our already limited forces, while a courageous retreat on the coast line of Derna might have permitted us to resist, perhaps even



victoriously. The Duce has returned from Puglie, where he conferred with Cavallero. He is sombre and pessimistic. The front is not yet stabilized, notwithstanding the fact that we have sent many men and much material. "Greece," he says, "was a political masterpiece; we succeeded in isolating that country so that it had to fight against us all alone. Only the Italian Army failed us completely." He is concerned about his visit to Germany. He feels that he will meet Hitler under conditions of obvious inferiority.

On the Clisura front another Greek attack takes place. Let's hope that our troops will hold.

JANUARY 17, 1941. The topic of the day is the Duce's decision to mobilize by February 1st all the high Fascist officials—Government, Grand Council, Chamber, and Party. When Serena made some objections about the practicality of the project, he answered that what he, the Duce, intends to do by working directly with the bureaucracy is an interesting experiment in government. We shall see. Nevertheless, in all the higher Government circles there is a good deal of dissatisfaction over the decision and the manner in which it has been proclaimed.

In the Duce's ante-room this morning I heard remarks and comments that surprised me. There is something in all of this government machinery that does not function well, and it would be wise not to ignore it. Some people, such as Bottai, go so far as to speak of a real "coup d'état by the Duce in order to get rid of Fascism and to place his reliance on other political currents". I do not believe all this. The more time passes the more I am inclined to discard anything too complicated. But the decision is certainly ominous, and perhaps this is not the time to undertake experiments "on the home front".

Cavallero is not going to Germany because a Greek attack is taking place. Guzzoni replaces him. I don't like this very much. I don't like him. He is a man who stirs up trouble, he is untrustworthy, and, besides, it is humiliating to present to the Germans such a small man with such a big paunch and with dyed hair.

JANUARY 18, 1941. Departure for Salzburg. Mussolini

arrives at the train frowning and uneasy. He is shaken by the news from Albania. Nothing too dramatic, but once again we have had a kick in the pants, leaving many prisoners in the hands of the enemy. The serious thing is that it involves the *Lupi di Toscana*, a division which has an excellent reputation and a grand tradition, landed only a short while ago in Albania, and on which we had placed high hopes. The Duce talks at length about all this. He repeats his pessimism concerning the Army and the Italian people. He can't explain it all. He keeps repeating: "If anybody had predicted on October 15th what later actually happened, I would have had him shot." Then he changes the subject. He is very much amused by reading a comedy which has had great success in Germany, entitled "Cherry Trees in Rome". The theme concerns Lucullus, and tries to prove that even a great strategist can have refined tastes and love comfortable living. Mussolini attributes the success of this comedy to a hidden vein of political satire, which escaped Nazi censorship. He repeats one of his slogans to the effect that the German people more than any other love their food, their drink, and their entertainment, and says that, when he has time for it, he, too, will give himself over to self-indulgence.

We arrive at a small station. I think it is Puch. Hitler and his Chiefs of Staff are waiting for us on the platform in the snow. The weather is fair and the cold not too intense. The meeting is cordial and, what surprises me most, spontaneously cordial. There are no hidden condolences in the air—condolences that Mussolini feared. There is, without delay, a meeting between Hitler and the Duce, and also one between me and Ribbentrop. A written report of the latter was presented. I am briefly informed about the other by Mussolini himself, who says that he found a very anti-Russian Hitler, loyal to us, and not too definite on what he intends to do in the future against Great Britain. In any case, it is no longer a question of landing in England. Hitler said that the undertaking would be extremely difficult and that if it failed the first time it could not be attempted again. Added to this there is the fact that, while England now fears the loaded pistol of invasion, after a failure she would know that Germany holds only an empty pistol.

Mussolini said that he brought Hitler up to date on Italian matters, including the undecided attitude of the King, which, however, does not influence others, and finally, also, about Badoglio, which Hitler compared to the Fritsch<sup>234</sup> case. On the whole, the Duce is satisfied about the conversation. I am less so, especially because Ribbentrop, who in the past had always had an attitude of bravado, now, in answer to a definite question of mine on the length of the war, said that he sees no possibility of ending it before 1942. And how about us?

Subsequently, many conversations take place, the most important on Monday in the presence of military experts. Hitler talked for about two hours on his coming intervention in Greece; he dealt with the question primarily from a technical point of view, relating it to the general political situation. I must admit that he does this with unusual mastery. Our military experts are impressed. Guzzoni, with his tightly stretched paunch and his little dyed wig, according to Alfieri, made a poor impression on the Germans. He expressed surprise about Hitler's deep understanding of military matters.

Results of the visit, generally good. There is absolute solidarity between the countries of the Axis, and we shall march together in the Balkans. To us is assigned the hard task of bringing back home the Spanish Prodigal Son. I wish to add that, in my opinion, if Spain falls away the fault rests in great part with the Germans and their uncouth manners in dealing with Latins, including the Spanish, who, probably because of their very qualities, are the most difficult to deal with.

On his return, Mussolini is elated, as he always is after a meeting with Hitler.

I wrote a letter to Serrano, proposing a meeting in Genoa between the Duce and the Caudillo. We shall soon see the Spanish reaction.

JANUARY 22, 1941. The news from Rumania worries Berlin. The conflict between Antonescu and the Legionaries had been foreseen by Hitler because of the equivocal situation that was created. Here the Führer has had no hesitation about

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<sup>234</sup> General Baron Werner von Fritsch: German Chief of Staff. Lost favour with Hitler and was relieved of office, 1938. Killed in action before Warsaw, believed murdered by the Nazis.

his choice. His sympathies go to Antonescu, who has shown himself to be "a man of good faith, who is resolved to hold the command firmly in his hands, and a very thorough nationalist". In fact, von Ribbentrop telephoned late in the day that instructions have been given to the German Minister to support Antonescu in every way. He requests that the same thing be done with respect to Ghigi. Naturally I carry out the request, but I have a vague suspicion that the influence of our Minister is not so decisive as that of his German colleague.

Tobruk has fallen. There has been a little more fighting, but only a little. The Duce is allowing himself to be lulled by his illusions. I thought it necessary to speak to him with brusque frankness. "At Sidi Barrani," I said, "they spoke of surprise. Then, you counted upon Bardia, where Bergonzoli was, the heroic Bergonzoli. Bardia yielded after two hours. Then you placed your hopes in Tobruk because Pitassi Mannella, the king of artillerymen, was there. Tobruk has also been easily wrested from us. Now you speak with great faith of the escarpment of Derna. I beg to differ with your dangerous illusions. The trouble is grave, mysterious, and deep." This is what I said, but in reality there is very little mystery in it. The reasons for this frightful collapse of the Italians of to-day in contrast to the Italians of 1918 appear very clearly to any observer. I was not wrong in not wanting war.

In Albania, Cavallero is preparing an offensive. I am waiting without excessive illusions but with faith. The Greek sector is probably the only one that holds out hopes of a few hours of sunlight.

Conversation with Gambara. I arranged for him to be received by the Duce. Notwithstanding my efforts, I have not succeeded in getting him a command in Albania, although he lived there for four years. The Italian General Staff does not like him; he is not one of them, and he has committed the unpardonable sin of advancing by leaps and bounds in his career, a career to which are linked the names of our victories in Spain.

I have given the Duce a serious and harsh letter from Professor Faccini of Leghorn, whose eighteen-year-old son, mobilized on January 17th, was sent to Albania on the same day, without knowing what a firearm was. This explains so many things.

JANUARY 24, 1941. The Duce conferred for a long time with Gambara and is becoming more and more favourable to the idea of putting him at the head of the army now under Vercellino. It seems to me that Gambara is not in the King's good graces, and probably for this reason the Duce suggests that Gambara should ask to be received by the King. I tell this to Gambara, who admits that he has never been to see the King once in his whole career. He will go to-morrow.

Grandi got his orders to report for service. He wasn't expecting this and didn't welcome it at all. In addition to the convenience of staying at home, he attached a political significance to his not being mobilized. So like his complicated nature. All his hopes now have been dashed. What remains is the stark fact of having to return at the age of forty-five to pound the snow with his Alpine mountain boots, so worn out that he had considered them done for.

As I foresaw the day before yesterday, Mussolini is concentrating his hopes on the escarpment of Derna. What has happened up to now has taught very little—at least to him.

JANUARY 25, 1941. I say good-bye to the Duce. To-morrow evening I will join my air group in Bari. He wasn't so cordial as he should have been. But Mussolini in these last few days has begun to feel that the order to send the Ministers away from Rome has not met with public favour, and, as always happens in such cases, he becomes more stubborn in his decision and more brusque in speech. In saying farewell he made certain observations which he might very well have omitted.

In the afternoon I saw Donna Rachele. She is very much alarmed at the way things are going. As is her simple nature, she follows gossip and small talk, especially in the matter of money, and has no real sense of proportion. In any case, she thinks that the barometer indicates stormy weather, and she affirms that everything and everybody blames the Duce. She is canny in her own way. She complained that the starlings that she loved to shoot had deserted the pines of Villa Torlonia. "With the wind that blows even the starlings have changed direction; they are flying to the trees of Villa Savoia where the King lives," she said.

Cavallero has attacked in the direction of Clisura, and it seems that everything is proceeding well.

JANUARY 26, 1941. Departure. This time, as I have a certain amount of experience in such departures, I find it hard to leave. I have no apprehensions, only a little conviction, and consequently less enthusiasm. All of my comrades who have become volunteers by force feel this way, and many do not hide their feelings.

APRIL 24, 1941. I resume my notes. I have made an appointment with Pavelic for to-morrow at Ljubljana. It is a matter of finding out what the Croats think more than of reaching any definite conclusions. It will not be easy. In Italy, too, there is strong propaganda in favour of the acquisition of Dalmatia, which is carried on by the usual agitators. To be pro-Dalmatian is a profession for many. Nevertheless, we have prepared two solutions: one that involves a continuous stretch of territory from Fiume to Cattaro, and one limited to historic Dalmatia. This last-named portion should be integrated by a political contract which would practically put the whole of Croatia under our control. The attitude of the Germans in all this is ambiguous. When we met at Vienna they gave us a free hand. But up to what point are they sincere?

With Acquarone we settle on a visit that the King wants to make to Albania. He also talks about the restoration of the Petrovich<sup>235</sup> dynasty in Montenegro. "Danilo, that perpetual libertine Danilo," as Mussolini calls him, has a son. We must go easy in this, especially so as not to arouse hope in Albania for a dynasty of their own. But the Queen is using her influence to push the issue. Meanwhile, I have sent Mazzolini<sup>236</sup> as our representative to Cetinje.

APRIL 25, 1941. In Ljubljana. A hell of a day. It is raining and there is a freezing wind. The people have a distraught air but are not hostile. I see Pavelic, surrounded by

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<sup>235</sup> Petrovich: Royal House of Montenegro. Queen Elena of Italy was a former princess of Montenegro. King Nicholas was deposed in 1918; Crown Prince Danilo did not want to assume the Royal title, which therefore fell into abeyance. Montenegro was allied with Serbia in 1918.

<sup>236</sup> Count Serafino Mazzolini: Italian Minister to Egypt, 1937-40. Viceroy of Montenegro, 1941. Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs in "Republican Fascist" administration, 1943. Director of "Corriere Adriatico".

his band of cut-throats. He declares that the solutions proposed by us would have him thrown out of his job. He makes a counter-proposal: the Dalmatia of the London pact,<sup>237</sup> with Trau added, goes to us. Spalato and Ragusa, in addition to some islands, would remain Croatian. His followers are more extreme than he. They invoke statistics to prove that in Dalmatia only the stones are Italian. On the contrary, Pavelic is favourable to the political pact. He doesn't even exclude the eventuality of a union under one head, or a monarchy under an Italian prince. He asks for time to think about it for a few days, then we shall meet again.

I see the ex-governor of Slovenia. I have known him since the times of Stoyadinovich. He is unhappy over the fate of that part of Slovenia which has remained under the Germans. Grazioli tells me that the German treatment of the population is actually worse than cruel. Armed robberies and killings occur every day. Churches and convents are looted and closed.

APRIL 26, 1941. Except for Spalato, Mussolini is in agreement with Pavelic and justly maintains that it is better to attract Croatia into our political orbit than to gain a little more territory populated by hostile Croats. With the Duce we prepare the decree for the annexation of Ljubljana. It will be an Italian province with broad administrative autonomy, both cultural and fiscal. Our humane treatment of the Croats, as compared with the Germans' inhuman treatment, should attract their sympathy to us. The Duce is also resentful of the German attitude in Greece. The Germans have practically assumed the air of protectors of the Greeks, and there was nearly an incident between the soldiers of the Casale division and S.S. troops of Hitler's regiment at Ponte di Piernacti.

Even Farinacci telephones me to deplore the attitude of the Germans. When he does that, it means a lot.

Grandi wrote a letter to Cavallero refusing his nomination

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<sup>237</sup> The "secret" Treaty of London of April, 1915, whereby Italy aimed at securing, in return for her entrance into the war on the Allied side, the conversion of the Adriatic into an Italian lake, "il mare nostro". It gave Dalmatia from Lissarica to Capa Planca to Italy, including all the islands. The treaty became a dead letter when the U.S. entered the war, as President Wilson would not be bound by it, and it was even disapproved of by some Italians.

as Civil Commissioner in Greece. It appears that Bottai, on the other hand, would go willingly.

APRIL 27, 1941. Von Mackensen comes to my house at one o'clock in the morning, and together we go to Villa Torlonia, where we find Mussolini half asleep but quite courteous. Hitler says that the Greek general, Tsolacoglu,<sup>238</sup> or some such name, is ready to establish a Greek Government in Athens with which we might be able to negotiate the surrender of Greece. He is favourable to this. In fact, he considers all this as a "heaven-sent opportunity". We must send a delegation to Larissa early to-morrow morning. I suggest Anfuso, and the Duce approves. We are naturally less enthusiastic than the Germans, and it seems to us that we can discern in all this the explanation of much of the German attitude in Greece, including what has occurred within the last few days. However, Anfuso, having arrived early in the morning at Larissa, informs us that he finds there neither the German nor the Greek delegation, and that, besides, Marshal List<sup>239</sup> had not been informed of his arrival. This puts the Duce in good humour, because it proves "that even in Germany things don't run smoothly", and gives us another singularly important instance to add to the many we have noticed during these marvellous six months of German-Greek relations. Later, List informs us that the two delegations will arrive to-morrow morning.

I request the Duce to give the Stefani agency his telegram of praise for Cavallero, and he agrees.

APRIL 28, 1941. This affair about Tsolacoglu pleases me less and less. Anfuso informs me that it is a matter of recognizing a Government which enjoys sound and legal backing; although the territorial occupation of the country is a fact, it is clear that this General proposes to save the national and ethnic unity of Greece, and German connivance is equally clear. It seems to me that the least we are entitled to do is to ask the Germans to leave to us the civil government of the

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<sup>238</sup> General George Tsolacoglu: Head of Greek Puppet Government, 1941-2. Acting Minister of Justice, 1942. He was arrested, tried and sentenced to death by the Greek Government in 1945.

<sup>239</sup> General Siegmund Wilhelm Walther List: Commander of German army in Greece. Commanded German troops at Polish front, 1939, and in Rumania, 1940. Commander-in-Chief, Balkans, 1941. Served in Russia, 1942-4. He was captured in 1945.



territories that we claim. Otherwise, I fear that what we get out of it will be very small.

Casertano telephones that much progress has been made with the Croats in regard to the frontiers of Dalmatia and also as to the possibility of instituting a monarchy under a prince of the House of Savoy. I summoned him to Rome.

The King insists upon a restoration of the monarchy in Montenegro. I fear that this will create tension with Albania, where a national dynasty will be demanded. But the Duce has already agreed, and I don't want to play the spoil-sport. The King of Montenegro will be a nephew of Queen Elena, a young man whom the Duce calls "a son of many and poor parents". He lives in Germany, in obscurity and almost in poverty.

APRIL 29, 1941. With Buffarini I prepare a political map for the creation of the Province of Ljubljana. It is inspired by very liberal concepts. It will have the effect of attracting sympathies for us in Germanized Slovenia, in which the worst abuses are being reported.

Casertano at the Duce's. The Croatian affair has progressed. The crown is offered to a prince of the House of Savoy, but no compromise in respect to Spalato. Pavelic declares that if he were to relent on Spalato he would have to resign, and with him would collapse all his pro-Italian policy. The Duce is aware of our real interests, but is stubborn about yielding on the question of Spalato. He uses the same words that he used during the Fiume-Dalmatia conflict in 1919-20.<sup>240</sup> I am more and more convinced of the necessity of advancing the problem towards a political solution, which also seems to me to be the most convenient from the military point of view. Is it really worth the trouble of saving a city in which the only thing Italian is its monuments, and so lose control over a large and rich kingdom? The rights of the stones are undeniable, but even stronger are the rights of the living.

Conference with Roatta. The General Staff warmly advocates a political solution in Croatia, and considers as dangerous any extremist step as regards Dalmatia.

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<sup>240</sup> Fiume-Dalmatian conflict: The Treaty of Rapallo, 1920, between the Yugoslavs and the Italians, endeavoured to regulate the Adriatic question. Mussolini was an observer during the treaty negotiations.

APRIL 30, 1941. A meeting with the King on the Croatian question. On his part there are no objections to concessions about Spalato. On the contrary, he is pleased. The King is of the opinion that the less of Dalmatia we take the less trouble we will have. "If it were not for a certain understandable sentimentality," he said, "I would be in favour of relinquishing even Zara." He is very happy, on the other hand, about the bestowal of a crown on a prince of his house. If the Duke of Aosta had been in Italy the King would have designated him without hesitation; as things stand, the only choice is between the Duke of Spoleto and the Duke of Pistoia. The King favours the first, because of his physical appearance and also, up to a certain point, because of his intellectual capacities. I found the King in good health, sunburned from his tour of the Alps, and, generally speaking, in good humour. As usual, he is anti-German.

The Duce replies to Pavelic's letter, accepting the crown, and he gives his last instructions to Casertano: to insist on Spalato but not to the point of creating a break. To-day our paratroops occupied Cefalu. They are only a few, about one hundred and fifty, and we hope that they will not be thrown into the sea by the local garrison. The Duce is anxious to make the announcement "because since we now have a good number of paratroops we can, even if it be only one regiment, say that it is a division". This upsets me. We are at it again, and the lessons of the past have taught us little.

MAY 1, 1941. All the grumblers who most criticized the Greek affair are now extremists in the matter of Dalmatia. This is particularly true in the Senate, which distinguished itself during the debates on Albania by its blathering. Senator Felici speaks to me of a sort of petition to the Duce to ask that not even a centimetre of coast line should go to Croatia. I have told Acquarone that it would be timely for him to make it clear that it is useless to undertake such an absurd campaign. In the Senate the word of the Royal Household is very much heeded.

MAY 2, 1941. Badoglio's second son has died in Libya as a result of a motor accident. I am sorry. In spite of the fact that Badoglio has given me good cause to dislike him, I am really sorry for the loss of his son.

Casertano telephones that all hope for Spalato is not lost.

MAY 3, 1941. Mussolini instructs me to read an order of the day which Rommel addressed to our divisional commanders in Libya. He goes so far as to threaten to denounce them before military tribunals. It seems that, owing to this, some trouble has arisen, and I would be surprised if it were otherwise. In Albania, too, where at a certain point our Army has had to face considerable obstruction from the Germans, the feeling of resentment towards our Allies is marked. The Duce realizes this and gives Farinacci the responsibility of drafting a letter to Hitler to call attention to what has happened. He has chosen Farinacci because he has no official position and because there are no possible doubts as to his pro-German feelings.

MAY 4, 1941. Casertano reports that Spalato might now be given to us with some reservations about the administration of the city. The Duce is satisfied. It seems that Pavelic wants to have some preliminary talks with the Duce. I should prefer it if we arrived at a quick conclusion, especially because the German attitude towards us with reference to Croatia is anything but clear. Alfieri, for what it is worth, continually sounds the alarm from Berlin, and considers that a meeting between Hitler and Mussolini is necessary to settle the principal points of our claims.

A long speech by Hitler. I have not read it yet, but Mussolini, who listened to it, judges it with considerable detachment and says that it is a useless speech that might much better not have been made.

MAY 5, 1941. Farinacci's letter to Hitler is not sent. The Duce is satisfied with the Führer's explanation and, on the other hand, did not like the introduction of Farinacci's letter, which vaunted his own exploits in Albania.

For the day after to-morrow we have set a conference between Mussolini and Pavelic. It will take place on the frontier, as near Zagreb as possible, because it will not be very prudent for Pavelic to be absent too long from his capital. The Duce has put a stop to the Dalmatian agitation by the usual over-zealous people, many of them acting in bad faith, with the aim of creating expectations that might bring disillusionment later on.

As always, Hitler's speech was excellent. I like the oratory of this man more and more. It is strong and persuasive. It was

an informative speech, but at the same time one in which no assurances were given. All those who, on the basis of previous declarations, believed that the end of the war would come in 1941 have been bitterly disappointed. For my part I have entertained but few hopes of this kind.

On the Duce's advice I have written a letter to Serrano Suñer. I congratulate him on his speech and give him advice about Axis intransigence. *Palabras y plumas el viento las lleva*. The wind carries away both words and feathers.

MAY 6, 1941. Departure for Monfalcone. On the train Mussolini is wrapped in thought. We speak at length of the future prospects of the war. I cannot say that he has any clear idea of the future now that he has abandoned his optimistic view of a rapid end. I give him my ideas, the tenor of which is that a compromise peace should be welcomed by us, especially now that we have acquired our share of booty. He appears to agree. Recent vicissitudes, and above all tension with the German troops in Greece, have opened his eyes to many things.

MAY 7, 1941. We arrive at Monfalcone. It is an overcast and cool day. Pavelic is escorted by some carloads of Ustasci, which give his trip a strange cowboy character. We received him in a little waiting-room of the station. Nothing sensational happened. There is confirmation of the results of previous conferences. On some points Pavelic appeals to the generosity of the Duce, and the latter naturally agrees—a matter of a customs union and of some bits of territory. On my part, I hold firm on Curzola and Buccari. I want to see a monument erected to my father at Buccari. The ceremony of the offer of the crown will take place on Sunday the 18th.

On the train Mussolini is in good humour and loquacious. He expresses satisfaction over the results obtained and criticizes those who would like a totalitarian solution of the Dalmatian problem, neglecting Croatia. He is particularly amusing when he describes at length the old Italian socialists. All the men of those days are brought to life in his colourful description. "They were bourgeois," he concludes, "who were terrified of the proletariat and were afraid of only one thing: revolution."

He will take care of the question of the army commands and will get rid of Guzzoni.

MAY 8, 1941. Through Acquarone I inform the King of the results achieved, and he decides to leave for Albania the day after to-morrow. Acquarone says the Duke of Spoleto is proud of the task which awaits him, but concerned about losing his liberty. "When we looked for him, to give him the news, we managed to find him, after twenty-four hours' search, in a Milan hotel, where he was hiding with a young girl."

Mussolini informs the Council of Ministers of what has been done and what will be done. The Council's approval appears to be complete and enthusiastic. I leave for Tirana, where I shall receive the King.

MAY 9, 1941. At Tirana. The general feeling is good; the soldiers feel more and more that Italian effort has worn out the Greeks, and they are proud of it.

MAY 10, 1941. The King arrives. The weather is bad—cold and rainy—which does not prevent the streets being crowded with enthusiastic people—sincerely enthusiastic. The King is in very good humour and is moved. He didn't think that he would find Albania so developed and fertile. In his mind was the memory of that heap of arid, hard rocks which is Montenegro, for which he holds, none the less, a great deal of affection, even to the point of wanting to re-establish it with the boundaries of 1914. I do not think this is possible. The Albanians would rebel violently against any such decision. We have enough to do to restrain their ambitions, which now go so far as Antivari and beyond.

The King is very courteous to me. He repeatedly said that it was I who "built up" Albania, and he tried in every way to show his friendliness to me. He was rather distant with Cavallero, who noticed it and did not conceal his resentment. I had to work hard to get him an invitation to lunch with the King, and I did it because Cavallero's exclusion from such an intimate repast would have given rise to many rumours.

MAY 11, 1941. All the ceremonies were carried out well. During the evening reception the Royal Palace was used by us for the first time. Afterwards eight cigar lighters, a silver case, and sixty knives and forks were missing. As a début on the part of Tirana high society, that's not bad.

Acquarone has spoken to me of the personal financial situa-

tion of the King. I, like everyone else, thought he was very rich. On the contrary, he is not. He probably has something between twenty-five and thirty millions. As for the jewels, they are the property of the Crown, and they are linked to the entail established by Charles Albert in order to safeguard the family from the prodigality of Victor Emmanuel II, who died loaded with debts. The King gives a monthly allowance of 20,000 lire to each of his daughters and keeps 100,000 lire for himself. He is concerned about the expenditures of his son, for he foresees "that, like his grandfather, he will always have money troubles".

I return to Bari by air and proceed to Rome by train.

MAY 12, 1941. Mussolini was annoyed because the King, in Tirana, had presided over the Council of Ministers. He was reassured only when I explained that it was more a meeting for the Royal Signature than anything else. The Germans have taken a step in Tokyo with which we have associated ourselves. They have invited the Japanese to adopt a definite anti-American stand. I don't know whether the note will have any great effect. Matsuoka<sup>241</sup> does not conceal his great friendliness and respect for the United States. Phillips, with whom I spoke to-day, no longer excludes the possibility of intervention by his country, and, as usual, he talks of a very long war. Even the Duce, who had always talked about a blitz war, now believes in a long one, mentioning the year 1948. He bases all this on information given him by Forzano, that buffoon Forzano, who, in Athens, is supposed to have talked with Marshal List, which I doubt very much.

A strange German communiqué announces the death of Hess in a plane accident. I cannot conceal my scepticism about the truth of this version. I even doubt whether he is dead at all. There is something mysterious about it, even though Alfieri confirms the report that it was an accident.

MAY 13, 1941. The Hess affair has a tinge of sensationalism. Hitler's substitute, his second-in-command, the man who for fifteen years has had the most powerful German organization

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<sup>241</sup> Yosuke Matsuoka: Japanese representative at the League of Nations, made the farewell speech declaring Japan's secession from the League. Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1940-1. Surrendered voluntarily to MacArthur in 1945, died 1946.

in his grasp, has made an aeroplane landing in Scotland. He fled, leaving a letter for Hitler. In my opinion, it is a very serious matter: the first real victory for the English. In the beginning, the Duce believed that Hess had been forced to make a landing while he was on his way to Ireland in order to start a revolt, but he very soon abandoned this thesis, and he now shares my impression of the exceptional importance of this event.

Von Ribbentrop arrives in Rome unexpectedly. He is discouraged and nervous. He wants to confer with the Duce and me for various reasons, but there is only one real reason: he wants to inform us about the Hess affair, which is now in the hands of the press all over the world. The official version is that Hess, sick in body and mind, was a victim of his pacifist hallucinations, and went to England in the hope of facilitating the beginning of peace negotiations. Hence, he is not a traitor; hence, he will not talk; hence, whatever else is said or printed in his name is false. Ribbentrop's conversation is a beautiful feat of patching things up. The Germans want to cover themselves before Hess speaks and reveals things that might make a great impression in Italy. Mussolini comforted von Ribbentrop, but afterwards told me that he considers the Hess affair a tremendous blow to the Nazi regime. He added that he was glad of it because this will have the effect of bringing down German stock, even with the Italians.

Dinner at home with von Ribbentrop and his associates.

The Germans are depressed. Von Ribbentrop repeats his slogans against Great Britain with that monotony that made Goering dub him "Germany's No. 1 parrot".

It seems that Bismarck, who hates von Ribbentrop, emphasized every phrase of his Minister with heavy kicks under the table at Anfuso, to whom he finally said: "He is such an imbecile that he is a freak of nature."

MAY 14, 1941. Ribbentrop left after having said good-bye to Mussolini in a brief meeting at the Palazzo Venezia. The Hess affair has had no developments so far. The British radio says that he spends his time writing, which disturbs Ribbentrop. When Ribbentrop's four-engined plane was taking off, Bismarck said to Anfuso: "Let's hope that they will all fall and

break their necks; but not here, or we'll have some unpleasant work to do." That's German national solidarity for you!

In the meantime, in Japan things are not going as they should, and still worse in Russia. Ribbentrop himself, when questioned by the Duce, avoided giving a definite answer, and said that if Stalin is not careful "Russia will be dealt with within three months". The chief of the Military Intelligence Service, on the basis of information gathered in Budapest, says that the attack is already decided upon, and will begin on June 15th; Hungarians and Rumanians are meant to collaborate. This may be. But it is a dangerous game and it seems to me without a definite purpose. The story of Napoleon repeats itself.

A long conversation with Spoleto. He is proud of having been chosen as King of Croatia, but has no exact idea of what he is supposed to do and is vaguely uneasy about it. I emphasize that he will be a Lieutenant-General with a crown at the service of the Fascist Empire. In any case, it will be necessary to keep the reins tightly in our grasp.

MAY 15, 1941. Contrary to expectations, the speculation of Anglo-American propaganda on the Hess case is quite moderate. The only documents that are really harmful are the German dispatches, confused and reticent. Alfieri writes that the confusion in Berlin is now at its height in all circles. He stresses the fact that the Germans, despite their efficiency and determination, are poor losers.

A long conversation with the Prince of Piedmont. Although he has been personally courteous to me, yet I have felt that there is considerable bitterness in his heart. For a man so prudent he has frankly criticized the Fascist system in general and the Fascist press in particular. He now lives among the military, and, during the last few months, has absorbed a good dose of poison which has had some effect on him. He does not yet know how to analyse or synthesize very well. He has neither the experience nor the acumen of his father, though I consider him a very much better man than his reputation has made him out to be. He recalled what I predicted about two years ago on the development of the Croatian question.

MAY 16, 1941. A lull of expectancy in the Hess case.



Even the British press mentions a mysterious peace mission, going so far as to imply a pre-arranged agreement between Hitler and Hess. This is in contrast to Ribbentrop's declarations, and also to German uneasiness, which isn't decreasing.

Augusto Moschi came to see me; he is the nephew of Donna Rachele, and for a long time has held the keys to the heart of his powerful aunt. And now he has been dethroned, his place being taken by Pater, a useless engineer, who builds houses of sawdust and cardboard. Moschi violently attacks Pater, accusing him of having disturbed the peace of Villa Torlonia with intrigues and evil doings of every kind. He is a puny Rasputin in disguise, who takes advantage of his influence to secure all kinds of personal benefits. Maybe Moschi is exaggerating, but there must be something to it. Edda, who is intelligent and outspoken, pointed out to me some months ago the strange role that Pater was playing with her mother, and concluded by attributing the situation to "the effects of the change of life".

For some months, in fact, Donna Rachele has been disturbed, diffident, and busies herself like a detective with a thousand things that don't concern her. It even seems that she goes snooping around dressed as a bricklayer, a woman of the people, and God knows what else. All this will end in a formidable turmoil, and it is well to keep out of it. Pater's influence may be behind Starace's imminent and unjust dismissal, since Pater is Starace's bitter enemy. One of the ways in which the Duce explained it to me was to say that he had learned from his wife that Starace sends a militiaman to walk his four dogs. "Italy," said Mussolini, "is still too fed up with d'Annunzio's dogs to tolerate those of Starace."<sup>242</sup>

MAY 17, 1941. An incident on the King's departure from Tirana was the only disagreeable note of an otherwise very successful visit. A nineteen-year-old boy, a certain Mihailoff, a Macedonian-Greek, fired a few pistol shots at the royal carriage; the boy, who seems to be half unbalanced, wanted in

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<sup>242</sup> D'Annunzio became the laughing stock of the Italians when he had his many dogs paraded on a leash by liveried flunkies. This was one of his many eccentricities which were permitted and paid for under the Fascist regime.

this way to voice his indignation for not having been recognized as a poet by the local authorities. Needless to say, his poems are worth a great deal less than the few lire of subsidy which he had repeatedly received. The King attached no importance to the incident and remained very cool. It appears that he even said to Verlaçi, who was seated at his side: "That boy is a poor shot, isn't he?"

Starace has been ousted, and I must say that nothing was done to make the blow less painful. When he came to see me he was sad and apparently embittered by his sorrow. Unless there are reasons that have escaped me, Starace's dismissal and especially the manner in which it was done were unjust.

MAY 18, 1941. The Croats arrive with Pavelic at their head. They are in good humour and well disposed towards us. I should say that they are better disposed than the Albanians when they offer the crown. The ceremony is more or less the same as that with the Albanians. In the streets, few and undemonstrative people. Not many realize the importance of the event. When His Majesty designated the Duke of Spoleto and the delegation saw him, there was a murmur of approval among them. Let us hope that it will be the same when they hear him speak. Everything went with due formality, including the signing of the Acts, the content of which seemed to those who had knowledge of them to have a greater political significance than was expected. It now remains to be seen if what we have built will be lasting. Maybe I am mistaken in my personal impression, but there is a feeling in the air that Italian domination in Croatia is to be temporary. And this is why the public is indifferent. Only one piece of news would really send the country wild with enthusiasm: the news that peace had been declared.

Pavelic is sure of himself, and to-day he is calm and modest, as he was in Rome when living like an expatriate. He asks for some privileges, which are of secondary importance and advisable for us to grant in order to consolidate his position. During the evening, after one of the usual dinners at Court, formal and boring, the Croatian delegation leaves.

MAY 19, 1941. I present two nominations to the Duce:

Volpi<sup>243</sup> as president of the Italian-Croatian Economic Commission, and Bastianini as Governor of Dalmatia. Both are accepted, and I believe that the public will receive these names with favour. Yesterday's announcements, which were printed in the press only to-day, are meeting with considerable favour, but there is no manifestation of that enthusiasm which one might have expected at other times.

I see Bottai. He is cordial and, I believe, sincere. He would like very much to free himself from the office of Minister of National Education, which for too long a time has overwhelmed him with work without giving him any satisfaction. I believe that deeply within himself he nourishes the ambition of being sent as Ambassador to Berlin. He would certainly do well, but at least for the time being it is out of the question. I should not want to cause Alfieri grief, even though he didn't know yesterday, after six months of war with Greece, what Florina was.

The Duce, when speaking to me of old Prince Bismarck, went on at some length to say that great as he was he had an intense sentimental life and wrote "schoolboy letters". From what the Duce related it was not difficult to perceive what I should call a personal interest in this side of the Iron Chancellor's private life. . . .

MAY 20, 1941. Pavelic has found a fairly good situation at Zagreb. One could not ask more.

Bastianini is going to Dalmatia as Governor. He is prudent, honest, and faithful.

Cavallero informs me what he proposes to do. Good. Meanwhile he will dismiss Guzzoni, the dyed-haired general—and that is perfect!

MAY 21, 1941. I accompany Mazzolini to the Duce's in order to settle the Montenegrin question, which is especially complicated because of the sentimental interest attached to it by the Royal Family. It seems that the idea of Prince Michael for the position is not popular in Montenegro. They do not

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<sup>243</sup> Count Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata: Senator and Minister of Finance. President of the Italian-Croatian Economic Mission. He negotiated war debt settlement with Great Britain and the United States after the 1914-8 war. Was admitted to Switzerland and as a refugee in 1944.

know him; he has married a Frenchwoman, and until now has been in the pay of Belgrade. On the other hand, the consensus of opinion is unanimous in favour of the Queen. She is the one who ought to wear the crown of the Petrovichs. Such a solution would also be very pleasing to me, because it would tend to place the country solidly in our hands. For the time being the King is recalcitrant. Now we have sent Mazzolini to explain to him how matters stand we hope that he will give his consent. As for the frontiers, the King would like to restore Montenegro to its 1914 borders. This is impossible. Albania would start an uprising, and we know from experience how invincible is the bitterness provoked by deceit on the part of allies. Versailles teaches us this lesson.

Pavelic made his first speech at Zagreb, which, to judge from the first press reports, seems good. They say that he is an impressive orator.

Grandi has returned to the fold with solemn affirmations of Franciscan devotion and humility. That was to be expected.

MAY 22, 1941. The King continues to object to the Queen's taking the crown of Montenegro and suggests the son of Prince Roman, who is a Petrovich. Let us hope that the son is better than the father, who is a fat-head. Moreover, he has a raucous voice. Mazzolini will try to speak about the matter in Cettigne, but maintains that it is very improbable that the idea will be received with favour, for the simple reason that everybody is unaware of the existence of this dear little boy.

MAY 23, 1941. I went to the country to see my mother. I find her fairly well and this gives me great joy.

Then I went to Leghorn. Although the city has always been loyal, Rodinis tells me that even recent events have caused no enthusiasm. He, who bases all his judgments on how many copies of our paper are sold, repeats that the circulation has not increased either for Dalmatia or for Croatia.

MAY 24, 1941. No news of any importance.

MAY 25, 1941. The Duce, yielding to Riccardi's insistence, had decided to remove Giannini as Director of Commercial Affairs. Clodius intervened in his favour, courteously but firmly, saying among other things that Giannini's dismissal

would render the commitments of both countries on the question of oil more complex. Riccardi is indignant and calls this blackmail. Anyway, the Duce has revoked his order and Giannini stays.

Bismarck gave Filippo<sup>244</sup> to understand that the Germans are in possession of our secret codes and read our telegrams. This is good to know; in the future, they will also read what I *want* them to read.

MAY 26, 1941. The King has informed us, through Acquarone, that Prince Roman does not wish to hear about the throne of Montenegro; therefore, we must come back to Prince Michael, who is living on Lake Constance. If he, too, refuses, we shall think of a regency. Frankly, I never dreamed we should waste so much brain power on a country like Montenegro.

No political news. In Crete, military operations are going well and there is great talk in the world because of the naval victory of *Bismarck*. In the meantime Otto Bismarck does not like it a bit that his grandfather's name should be involved in this anti-British struggle, and he foresees that *Bismarck* herself, pursued by *King George V*, is about to pay dearly for her adventure.

I see Bottai. He, like all those who return from Slovenia, is very anti-German. He speaks pessimistically of our internal situation, which, in his opinion, is characterized by the formation of two extra-legal groups, asserting a strong and dangerous influence on the Duce. On one side are Donna Rachele and Pater (and people in all quarters are talking a great deal about this affair), and on the other are the Petaccis<sup>245</sup> and their satellites. Like all outsiders, such people intrigue against those who hold legal and constitutional power, and it is in this way that Bottai explains the cold and almost hostile attitude which Mussolini has assumed towards the highest Fascist officials.

The Starace affair has made a deep impression on older Fascists, including the enemies of Starace, because everyone

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<sup>244</sup> Filippo: One of Ciano's secretaries.

<sup>245</sup> Petacci family: Dr. Marcello Petacci was the father of Clara, Mussolini's mistress. She was killed with Mussolini in 1945. As Ciano indicated, the Petacci family profited from Mussolini's association with Clara.

sees in this summary but pointless sentence a direct personal threat. Perhaps Bottai draws too dark a picture, but it is undeniable that among our Fascists one can perceive a marked uneasiness.

MAY 27, 1941. *Bismarck* has been sunk. This is important especially because of the repercussion it will have in the United States, where it will prove that the sea is dominated by the Anglo-Saxons. Alfieri has arrived. I can't say that he is a pessimist, but he doesn't show his old optimism. He says: "The war is won. All we have to do is find a way to stop it." This formula is dangerous. Mussolini is still in a bad humour and resentful towards the Army. This morning he was tempted to "get out of his car and whip the officers who were going to the Ministry of War—they were so unworthy of their uniform".

In the afternoon the Duce telephoned me asking me to speed up the negotiation with Russia, so that we can get a bit of oil. "Otherwise," said the Duce, "a little while longer and we will be compelled to sit with folded hands."

MAY 28, 1941. Cavallero has now resolutely assumed control of military affairs. From what he tells me I understand that the military under-secretaries will be reduced to the position of mere managers controlling the personnel and materials in their own offices, and this is right. I have also received Squero, the new Under-Secretary for War. He is an upright soldier, timid, modest, and very much surprised at the burden of responsibility that has landed on his shoulders. After the nomination he wept on Cavallero's breast, because it seems that he has a horror of speaking in public. And he considers a public three or more persons.

Speech by Roosevelt. It is very strong, even though it does not state any plan of action. Mussolini inveighs against Roosevelt, saying that "never in the course of history has a nation been guided by a paralytic. There have been bald kings, fat kings, handsome and even stupid kings, but never kings who, in order to go to the bathroom and the dinner table, had to be supported by other men." I don't know whether this is historically exact, but it is certain that Roosevelt is the individual against whom the Duce's greatest hostility is directed.

MAY 29, 1941. I accompany Alfieri to the Duce, who

asked him for news of the Hess affair. I must say, to judge from Alfieri's replies, that he knew little about it. Alfieri was the first who, taking the first communiqué seriously, practically broke his neck to telegraph Hitler his condolences for the "loss of his favourite colleague". The Duce later said that, in his opinion, the tone of German-Italian relations was lowered a bit, and from this observation went on to say that Italy is indispensable to Germany, exalting our co-operation and even our military contribution to the war.

The Duke of Spoleto comes on a visit. He wishes to take Guariglia with him to Zagreb, and this seems to be an excellent choice. He said nothing of any particular importance, but the tone of his conversation was distinctly anti-German.

I had lunch with Acquarone, who, with great reserve, put me on my guard against Cavallero, "who, according to the King, has a tendency to boast, and who cherishes exaggerated ambitions". But he also said that the King is thinking of nominating the Duce Chancellor of the Empire, and me President of the Council. But Mussolini, I am sure, will have none of this.

MAY 30, 1941. Information from Iraq is bad and, what is worse, our planes, a month after the conflict, have not yet gone into action. If there were any need of it, here you have new proof of the lack of preparation of our Air Force. Things are going better in Crete, on the other hand, where the defeat of the British seems imminent. Mussolini speaks of a hop on to Cyprus, but I know they are very sceptical about this at the German Embassy. Mussolini has had a violent anti-German outburst, apropos of German meddling at Zagreb. "They should leave us alone," he said, "and they should remember that through them we have lost an Empire. I have a thorn in my heart because the vanquished French still have their Empire, while we have lost ours." The Duce's ill temper is due to this. He was very much attached to Ethiopia, which he called "the Pearl of the Regime", and the years 1935 and 1936 the "Romantic Years of Fascism". Now he is trying to console himself by preparing for the reconquest of the Empire, but he is the first to grasp the risks and difficulties this will involve.

Bottai was saying to-day that Roosevelt is the real dictator:

our system of government, like those which have always flourished on the shores of the Mediterranean, ought to be interpreted as a tyranny. He is more and more sceptical about the progress of public affairs in Italy.

MAY 31, 1941. Hitler has sent word that he wishes to confer with the Duce at the earliest possible moment: to-morrow or the day after. Neither the invitation nor the form of invitation pleased the Duce. "I am sick and tired of being rung for." And he decided on the day after to-morrow for the meeting at the Brenner Pass. We have no idea of the purpose of the meeting, but at first sight I think that it must deal with either one of two subjects: France or Russia.

Sebastiani was got rid of by Mussolini, who explained it by saying that his family doesn't like him, and also reproached him for having built a villa at Rocca di Papa. Whoever has seen this villa says that it is a very modest place. The fact is that Sebastiani, too, is a victim of the campaign started against him by Donna Rachele—an exaggerated campaign, even if not altogether unfounded. I myself know the names of persons from whom Sebastiani took money to facilitate the establishment of industries in Apuania.

Galbiati,<sup>246</sup> who is taking the place of Starace, comes to pay me his formal visit. He interprets the function of the Fascist Militia as a watchdog for the revolution rather than as an armed force at the service of the country, and says it will operate along that line.

I learn from Bottai that the Duce is exasperated by the publication in the *Minerva Review* of Turin of a motto by some Greek philosopher or other. The motto reads: "No greater misfortune can befall a country than to be governed by an *old* tyrant".

JUNE 1, 1941. Departure for the Brenner Pass. On the train I had a long conversation with Bismarck on the Nazi regime. According to him, Goering has lost a good deal of his influence on Hitler because he "admonishes him too much", and dictators do not like that. Von Ribbentrop is very much listened to and Himmler very powerful also. Lutze's star is in

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<sup>246</sup> General Enzo Galbiati: Member of Fascist Grand Council. Commander of University Student Volunteers.



the ascendant. Since Hitler proved to be right on the offensive against the Maginot Line, the military men no longer dare open their mouths. The best men are with the troops, not those who surround the Führer.

The Duce is quite good-humoured, but he cannot understand the reason for this hastily arranged conversation. He is afraid that the Germans will want to expedite their agreement with Francè, and that this will take place at our expense. Repercussions in Italy resulting from an eventual renunciation of our Western aspirations would be very serious and damaging to the prestige of the regime.

JUNE 2, 1941. I have summarized our conversations elsewhere. The general impression is that for the moment Hitler has no precise plan of action. Russia, Turkey, Spain are all subsidiary elements: they do not provide means of solving the essential problem. The greatest German hope is now in the action of its submarine fleet, but one does not know what the summer will bring, with its starlit nights and calm sea. A slaughter of ships, some people say. A slaughter of submarines, others think. The Duce, too, is convinced that a compromise peace would be received by the Germans with the greatest enthusiasm. "They are now sick of victories. They now want the victory—a victory which will bring peace." The atmosphere of the meeting was good. Mussolini states that during the conversation he had privately with Hitler the latter spoke about Hess and wept. The Duce was satisfied with the meeting, especially because he was able to note that as far as we were concerned Italo-German relations remain satisfactory.

An opinion of the Duce on monarchies: "They are like those thick and strong trees, very flourishing on the surface, but hollowed by insects from within. All of a sudden they are struck down by lightning and there is no human power that can set them up again."

JUNE 3, 1941. On the instructions of the Duce I have drafted a letter to Serrano Suñer, emphasizing the advisability of Spain's adhering to the Tripartite Pact. Mussolini added a personal note to it.

On the whole, the Duce has a favourable opinion of yesterday's conference, at the same time commenting upon the

excessive verbosity of Hitler. He thinks that personal ties should be strengthened "by pairing off". It is my duty, therefore, to establish closer ties with von Ribbentrop. About Keitel the Duce expresses this opinion: "Keitel is a man who is happy that he is Keitel." Bismarck's opinion is more to the point: "Keitel is an imbecile."

During my absence Anfuso had to put up with a telephone assault from Donna Rachele about certain of the Duce's offences, which, parenthetically, are not our concern but the concern of the Ministry of Popular Culture. She didn't express herself in very refined language, and said that she will come to the Palazzo Chigi and start "shooting up the place". I don't know who puts certain things into her head, but I am not going to speak to the Duce, because of the high and noble feeling he has of maintaining his prestige in public affairs. But this increasing interference is a serious matter, and perhaps one day I shall be obliged to overcome all my reticence and speak to the Duce.

JUNE 4, 1941. Bárdossy<sup>247</sup> arrives—a man whose career has been rapid and ominous, at least for his superiors. I remember him in Vienna a year ago at the meeting on arbitration for Transylvania. He was a modest plenipotentiary at Bucharest. Later, Czaky's death brought him to the Government, and Teleki's suicide brought him to the presidency. What will become of the Regent? Bárdossy is a person of distinction and restraint, a career man. He offers a balanced judgment on the situation and reveals no attitude beyond that inspired by immediate expediency. Villani, however, says "that Bárdossy in reality has the same ideas that he has", which would mean that he hates the Germans. The conversation with the Duce had nothing particularly important about it, until Bárdossy went into ecstasies about Hungary's love for Rome. Then Mussolini, with the air of a sharp old wolf, or some diabolical and super-intelligent animal, said that the Hungarians were to Fiume what the Swiss were to Genoa. Bárdossy was

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<sup>247</sup> De Ladislas Bárdossy: Hungarian Minister to Rumania, 1934-41. Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1942-4. Fled to Switzerland, 1945. Expelled; condemned to death by Hungarian Provisional Government as a war criminal in 1945.

floored by these few words better than by any long conversation.

I saw Donna Rachele. She is in a continuous state of over-excitement for no reason at all. Her arguments are of no particular account. She could live quietly and undisturbed, but instead embitters her days by futile controversies.

JUNE 5, 1941. After one has been with Bárdossy for a little while one recognizes in him the classical career diplomat, devourer of cakes at ladies' teas, frequenter of South American legations and salons of unknown countesses. Even the language he speaks is that of the traditional head of mission. He forgets that he is the man responsible for the policy of his country, and assails you with the traditional "*qu'est ce que vous pensez, monsieur le Ministre?*", et cetera, which distinguishes those who belong to the diplomatic career from other mortals. Nevertheless, Bárdossy is a good fellow, and he, too, will pass, like the others, hurriedly and pompously, through the kaleidoscope of Hungarian politics. At any rate, he has left, and his visit to Rome was one of the most classically useless.

JUNE 6, 1941. Commercial negotiations in Berlin do not at present give very much satisfaction. Reductions in the coal quota, difficulties in the transportation of oil. Even scrap iron, which we were to receive from France, has been delivered to us only in very small quantities. Mussolini is resentful and this gives an anti-German tinge to his words. "This means that in the future we shall wage 'an ersatz war'. I would not be at all sorry if Germany in her conflict with Russia lost many feathers, and this is possible because the Russians are not lacking in armaments, and the only problem is whether twenty years of Soviet propaganda have been enough to create a heroic mysticism in the masses."

I receive Bose,<sup>248</sup> head of the Indian insurgent movement. He would like the Axis to make a declaration on the independence

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<sup>248</sup> Subhas Chandra Bose: Leader of the Left-Wing All-India Forward Block. Arrested under the Defence of India rules, July, 1940, in Calcutta. Elected to Central Legislative Assembly in October, 1940, while still in prison. He was released two months later, and disappeared in January, 1941. He fled to Germany, formed the Indian Independence League in Singapore in 1943 and declared war on Great Britain and the United States. The Japanese announced that he was killed in an accident flying over Formosa in August, 1945.

of India, but in Berlin his proposals have been received with a great deal of reserve. Nor must we be compromised, especially because the value of this upstart is not clear. Past experience has given rather modest results.

JUNE 7, 1941. Information from Berlin is still less favourable, which accentuates the anti-German tinge in the mind and words of the Duce. In fact, he was even thinking of postponing the speech which he was going to make at the Chamber on the 10th—the anniversary of our entrance into the war. "I would be expected to exalt our collaboration with Germany, and now this is repugnant to me."

Tassinari<sup>249</sup> informs me about the food situation. It is not brilliant but not very bad, and we may foresee an improvement as to fats. Prince Michael, who has refused the crown of Montenegro, opened his heart to the Consul, Serra di Cassano. He does not want to compromise himself because he is convinced that in the end Germany and Italy will be beaten, and for this reason he considers that any present solution is transitory and ephemeral. I do not believe that the Queen is very proud of the ideas of this sprig of the Petrovichs.

JUNE 8, 1941. Starace is full of self-pity for his personal misfortunes, but he complains quietly; he weeps from anger and, without actually saying so, out of hatred. I talk about him to the Duce. The most serious complaint that the Duce makes about him is that Starace wears a distinguished service medal without authorization. The criticism regarding financial doings finds less echo in Mussolini's mind. I was not very successful in defending Starace to the Duce, but it is my impression that the Duce's anger doesn't go deep. If Starace will swallow the Duce's scolding without kicking, we shall soon see him raised to power again.

De Gaulle has entered Syria. What will be the French reaction? Mussolini takes it out on the Germans: "They are not intelligent, that is all. They should have occupied the whole of France at the armistice."

JUNE 9, 1941. No particular news. News from Syria is still quite uncertain, but it seems that a considerable contingent

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<sup>249</sup> Giuseppe Tassinari: Senator, Director-General of food and administration.

of Dentz's<sup>250</sup> army has joined forces with the Gaullists. Which doesn't displease me at all; a Vichy French alliance with the Axis would have been at Italy's expense.

The Hungarian Minister of Defence, General Bartha,<sup>251</sup> who is visiting Rome, maintains that a Russo-German clash is more than inevitable—it is actually imminent. He is optimistic as to what is to be expected. He believes that the Russian Army cannot resist for more than six or eight weeks, because the human element is weak. It remains to be seen, however, how twenty years of a revolutionary regime have influenced them.

JUNE 10, 1941. What a strange anniversary of our entry into the war. Using as a pretext the increased German meddling in Croatia, Mussolini uttered the harshest charges against Germany that I have ever heard from him. He was the aggressive Mussolini, and hence Mussolini at his best. "It is of no importance," he said, "that the Germans recognize our rights in Croatia on paper, when in practice they take everything and leave us only a little heap of bones. They are dirty dogs, and I tell you that this cannot go on for long. I do not even know if German intrigue will permit Aimone, Duke of Spoleto, to ascend the Croatian throne. Besides, I have been thoroughly disgusted with the Germans since the time List made an armistice with Greece without our knowledge and the soldiers of the Casale division, who are natives of Forlì and hate Germany, found a German soldier at Ponte di Perati barring the road and robbing us of the fruits of victory. Personally, I've had my fill of Hitler and the way he acts. These conferences called by the ringing of a bell are not to my liking; a bell is rung when people call their servants. And besides, what kind of conferences are these? For five hours I am forced to listen to a monologue which is quite fruitless and boring. He spoke for hours and hours of Hess, of *Bismarck*, of things more or less related to the war, but he did not propose an agenda, he did not go to the bottom of any problem, or make any decisions.

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<sup>250</sup> General Dentz: French High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in Syria, 1940-1. Arrested in Paris, September, 1944, and condemned to death. His sentence was commuted and he died in prison in 1945.

<sup>251</sup> General Karl Bartha de Dalnokfalva: Hungarian Minister of Defence, 1938-42. Resigned, and became a Privy Councillor. He was tried in 1945.

Meanwhile, I can continue building fortifications of the Vallo Alpino. Some day they will be useful. For the moment there is nothing to be done. We must howl with the wolves. To-day at the Chamber I will cajole the Germans, but my heart is filled with bitterness."

The Duce has shown me his speech. I suggested that he use the soft pedal about the Turks, who are still allied to the British and who may have some surprises in store for us, especially since French resistance in Syria seems to be petering out.

The reception the Chamber gave to the speech was nothing to boast about, and the first comments to reach us are not altogether enthusiastic. But, I ask, could the Duce have acted any differently or better in the present situation?

JUNE 11, 1941. I tried here and there to sound out the reaction to the Duce's speech. But even among the die-hard Fascists the reactions are not good. Reactions are quite unenthusiastic at the German Embassy. Bismarck told Anfuso that some employee or other expressed himself as follows: "I have listened to seventeen speeches by Mussolini. This one is, without doubt, the worst." At lunch Farinacci, Cini,<sup>252</sup> Volpi, and Bottai subjected the speech to an intense fire of criticism. The uneasiness which lurks in the minds of all the Party leaders has a lot to do with these acid comments. I cannot agree with them. Perhaps the Duce should have said nothing, but since he did speak, I don't see what other line he could have taken.

The newspapers of the Fascist University Organization have abused a certain freedom of discussion which is granted them, and are inveighing against the Party leaders. They exaggerate—so much so that one can see that their arguments are influenced by the absurd and irresponsible grumblings of the mob. Although these youngsters are in the wrong, it must be admitted that the regime has also made a mistake; for twenty years it has neglected these young men, and has had them in mind only to deck them out in uniforms, hats, and capes, and herded them against their will into the squares to make a lot of noise.

JUNE 12, 1941. Nothing new.

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<sup>252</sup> Vittorio Cini. Leading Fascist Industrialist in Venice. Minister of Communications, 1943. Tried by the "Republican Fascists" in 1944.

JUNE 13, 1941. Negotiations with Berlin are dragging. Giannini does not blame the difficulties on the ill-will of the Germans, but on an authentic scarcity of resources. Mussolini is in a black humour. He says that he is glad that the people of Europe should see what German domination means. "We may be willing to give up our shirts, but the Germans remove even our hide."

With Jacomoni, the Duce settles upon some new directives concerning Albanian policy. A greater autonomy without eliminating the beys, who still count in the country, as recent events have proved, and also to receive into the Government some new elements which are closer to the intellectual classes and to the people.

JUNE 14, 1941. In Venice for the adherence of Croatia to the Tripartite Pact. When Ribbentrop arrives he is exceptionally gay and jovial. At dinner in a Venetian inn he is even amused by the vulgar repartee of a waitress. I myself, and all those who are with me, are astonished. We drop politics.

JUNE 15, 1941. As usual, I have had a stenographic report made of the conversations. The ceremony at the Ducal Palace was impressive, but more important than the frame is the canvas, since the participation of Croatia has the flavour of home-made spaghetti. The political value of the event is about zero.

Von Ribbentrop hastens his departure and gives us to understand clearly that this is due to an imminent crisis with Russia. Naturally, he raises no objections to this, approving all his master's exploits. But he is less ebullient than usual, and had the nerve to recall his enthusiastic praise of the Moscow agreement and of the Communist leaders, whom he compared with those of the old Nazi party.

Pavelic is satisfied with the course of events, and the others also confirm that the situation is becoming consolidated. He has already assumed the tone and gestures of a dictator, at least toward his satellites. He is very much of an extremist in the domestic policy. In his discussion with Vittorio Cini he maintained that the land must go to the peasants, and that as to industry, we must lead the way to the formation of state ownership of property. All this in ten years. Ansaldo, who is enraged

by such ideas, said: "We must not take the man seriously. Within ten months he will be liquidated."

JUNE 16, 1941. First I go to Ponte a Moriano, and then to Rome. There isn't much news except the talk by Churchill to the representatives of the invaded Powers. He was intransigent and arrogant. He called Mussolini a "tattered lackey".<sup>253</sup> I am unable to find out what the reactions are because the Duce went to Riccione to-day for a short holiday.

JUNE 17, 1941. Nothing important.

JUNE 18, 1941. Long telephone call from Ribbentrop. Two pieces of news: one good and the other not so good. The first is that an agreement has been reached between Turkey and Germany, consisting of neutrality, reciprocal respect, peaceful solution of all controversies, and no secret protocols. The second news is the expulsion of all United States Consuls from Axis territory, and vice versa. Which means that we are moving headlong towards an open state of war.

The Prefect of Bolzano has been in Germany to deal with the question of the evacuation of non-Italians from Alto Adige. The movement is slowing up under the specious pretext that Hitler has not yet chosen the territory where they are to go. The Prefect is convinced that the Germans want to mark time, in order to bring up the question again after the end of the war.

Things are better in Libya. The British attack was broken, and we have had a notable success. Bismarck didn't hesitate a minute however to make the following comment: "It won't be this sort of thing that will end the war."

JUNE 19, 1941. I conferred with the Turkish Ambassador on the possibility of a pact similar to the one concluded with Germany. If anything, we could go even further, since our two countries have near and mutual interests. The Ambassador did not answer, but seemed to be pleased. He is an odd type, with whom I have had little to do so far. In five years I have seen him no more than ten times, and the principal topic

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<sup>253</sup> Speech by Churchill on June 12, 1941, to a conference of Dominion High Commissioners and Allied Countries' Ministers, in London. "... It is upon this foundation that Hitler, with his tattered lackey Mussolini at his tail and Admiral Darlan frisking by his side, pretends to build out of hatred, appetite and racial assertion a new order for Europe. . . ."



of our conversations has been the cure of his rheumatism.

JUNE 20, 1941. Nothing new.

JUNE 21, 1941. Many signs give the impression that operations against Russia are about to begin. Bismarck secretly tells Filippo that he is expecting a message from Hitler during the night. The idea of a war against Russia is in itself popular, inasmuch as the date of the fall of Bolshevism should be counted among the most important in civilization. Considered as a symptom, such a war is not liked. There is no obvious and convincing reason for it. The current explanation is that this new war is a *pis aller*, that is, an attempt to find a way out of a situation that had developed unfavourably and not as had been foreseen. What will be the further course of the war? The Germans believe that it will all be over in eight weeks, and this is possible, since military calculations in Berlin have always been better than political calculations. But what if this should not be the case? If the Soviet armies should show the world a power of resistance superior to that the bourgeois countries have shown, what results would this have on the proletarian masses of the world?

JUNE 22, 1941. At three o'clock this morning Bismarck brings me a long missive from Hitler to the Duce, which seeks to explain the reasons for the invasion of Russia, and although the letter begins with the ritualistic assertion that Great Britain has lost the war, its tone is far from being as arrogant as usual. By telephone I inform the Duce, who is still at Riccione. Then, still early in the morning, I try to get in touch with the Soviet Ambassador in order to notify him of the declaration of war. I do not succeed in seeing him until twelve-thirty, since he and all the employees of the Embassy have, quite calmly, gone bathing at Fregene. He receives the communication with a rather lackadaisical indifference, but that is his nature. I submit the communication to him without idle words. The conversation lasted two minutes and was quite undramatic.

To-morrow Mussolini will send his answer to Hitler. The thing that is closest to the Duce's heart is the participation of one of our contingents, but from what Hitler writes it is clear that he would gladly do without it.

Riccardi makes a great outburst about the trends of our economic situation, and ends with this phrase: "At this stage of the affairs of the regime the only thing that might yet surprise me would be finding a pregnant man; aside from this we have seen everything."

## SECTION V

June 23, 1941—November 2, 1942

### *TWILIGHT OF GLORY*

ITALIAN troops sent to Russian front—German victories in Russia—Mussolini concerned over the Alto Adige situation—Agreement reached over Croatian frontiers—Anti-Fascism taking root in Italy—Naples bombed—Disorders in Montenegro—Hitler asks to take over the Italian air and naval commands—Ciano ill for two months—Death of Bruno Mussolini—Serious food situation in Italy—Germany blames Italy for the Greek economic situation—Ciano visits German H.Q. to confer with Hitler—Kesselring sent to command in Italy—Heavy sinkings of Italian ships—Marriage of Leopold of the Belgians—Ciano and Serrano Suñer go to Berlin—Japan demands that Italy declare war on the U.S.—Attack on Pearl Harbour—Ciano meets Admiral Darlan—Italy declares war on America—Meeting with Pavelic—German defeats on the Russian front—Serena dismissed—Mussolini wants control of the Tunisian ports—Changes in Libya command—Relations broken with several South American countries—Goering visits Rome—Death of Attolico—Sinking of the *Lucania*—Fall of Singapore—Albanian President visits Mussolini—Friction between Germans and Japanese—Death of Duke of Aosta—Investigation into the conduct of Gen. Gambara—Bread riots in Italy—Japanese air attack on Colombo—Growing scandal in Italy about the Petacci family—Laval becomes head of the French Government—Americans bomb Tokyo—Mussolini and Ciano visit Hitler at Salzburg—British occupy Madagascar—Plans for Axis attack on Malta—Friction between Hungary and Rumania—Axis attack in Libya—Fall of Tobruk—Illegal gold dealings discovered—Future administration of Egypt planned—Mussolini visits Libya and Athens—Aero-naval battle in the Mediterranean—Trouble in Greece—Rommel attacks in Libya—Sinkings of Italian ships—Government crisis in Spain—Edda Ciano concerned about Mussolini's health—Arrival of Myron Taylor to visit the Vatican—Greece on the verge of bankruptcy—Himmler visits Rome—20th Anniversary of the Fascist Party.

JUNE 23, 1941. From Russia the first news of German successes begin to arrive. They talk about seventeen hundred Russian planes destroyed in one night. Cavallero, who conferred with the Duce at Riccione, is of the opinion that the Germans can easily gain a great victory, and he believes that the Bolshevist armed masses will be dispersed, causing a collapse.

According to Bismarck, in German military circles they expect to take five million prisoners, "five million slaves," as Otto says. We are sending an expeditionary corps under the command of General Zingales, which will operate on the borders between Rumania and sub-Carpathian Russia.

Since the Hess affair, all fortune-tellers and astrologers in Germany have been arrested.

I see Phillips. He thinks that American intervention is inevitable and coming soon. He desires this intervention against Germany, because he hates Germany, but a war between his country and Italy saddens him a great deal.

Churchill has made a speech which, it must be objectively recognized, carries the mark of the great orator. I talked about it to Grandi, who, forgetting himself for a moment, expressed an extreme admiration for Churchill. "In England," he said, "I had few friends, but Churchill was really a friend."

JUNE 24, 1941. No definite news on the Russian front. Marras telegraphs that the German forward elements have met first-line Bolshevik resistance and are preparing an artillery attack. Our first contingents will leave in three days. The Duce is very much excited at the idea of this participation of ours in the conflict, and telephones me that to-morrow he will review the troops. I dispatch Mussolini's reply to Hitler to Berlin.

JUNE 25, 1941. The Turkish Foreign Minister has told de Peppo<sup>254</sup> that the proposal of a pact with us has had a favourable reception. Conversations may take place shortly.

Falangist contingents leave Spain for the Russian front. Mussolini does not like this and would like to prevent it, but I do not know what to do, since the German-Spanish agreement was made completely without our knowledge.

JUNE 26, 1941. At Verona, Mussolini reviewed the first division on its way to Russia. He telephoned to say that it was perfect. Be that as it may, I am concerned about a direct comparison between our forces and the Germans. Not because of the men, who are, or who may be, excellent, but because of their equipment. I should not like to see us play the role of a poor relation yet again.

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<sup>254</sup> Giuseppe de Peppo: Italian Ambassador to Turkey and Spain.

The Japanese desire the recognition of the Government of Wang Ching-wei, and they agree to this in Berlin. Von Ribbentrop telephones me about it, and adds that he is quite satisfied with the course of operations on the Russian front. In fact, the Germans have made considerable progress, while the Rumanians, as was to be foreseen, have allowed themselves to be thrust back.

JUNE 27, 1941. I go to Leghorn to pray at the tomb of my father. As time passes, his personality becomes greater, not only in my heart, but also in the memory of all those who loved him. To-day, as when I was a child, and as always, I feel strongly the need for his protection and his help. I know that he watches over me.

JUNE 28, 1941. Nothing new.

JUNE 29, 1941. German bulletins describe victories in Russia in simple and exultant terms. Also Ribbentrop telephoned Alfieri that the progress of operations has surpassed the most favourable predictions. Notwithstanding this, it seems that Ribbentrop is in a very bad humour; Alfieri explains it on the basis of internal German conflict.

Mussolini has returned. He looks well but is in an extremely sour humour. In the Gimma, a kingdom in Ethiopia, there was the usual surrender in great numbers, with generals at their head, despite a large amount of arms and equipment at their disposal. But even the most modern weapon, as Moltke says, is of no use when it is thrown in the ditch. The Duce is also concerned about the situation in the Alto Adige. For some time now the repatriation of the non-Italians has almost totally stopped. The letters which arrive from those who have left are filled with threats and insults against us. Mussolini fears "that the Italians will have to learn the hard way that every agreement with the Germans is nothing but a scrap of paper." This, too, he blames on the military, who have ruined our prestige, Graziani in particular.

JUNE 30, 1941. We must define the Albanian and Montenegrin frontiers, otherwise there will be a multiplication of incidents, above all with Croatia, like all new countries beginning to toy with imperialism. Pavelic now would like to have the sanjak of Novi Bazar, a district of Bosnia, an absurd and

unjust pretension. I am preparing a letter for the Duce to sign, refusing this request. At the Palazzo Venezia there is a meeting between Mussolini and Pietromarchi; the main points are put down and it is decided that if the Croats and Bulgarians should play tricks, the frontiers will be decided upon by decree, without their advice.

Mussolini gives vent to another anti-German outburst. He fears that the Germans are getting ready to ask for the Alto Adige; he says that he would resist this with armed force, but I do not see that he has the means to carry out such a threat. He was offended especially by the way the Germans treated him with regard to the Russian question. There was absolute silence on their part and only a "night alarm" to inform him of the accomplished fact. "I do not disturb even my servants at night," said the Duce, "but the Germans make me jump out of bed at any hour without the least consideration." The Duce realizes that Hitler did not welcome the participation of our troops on the Russian front, but he insists on sending them just the same. I tried my best to change his decision, but he is immovable and convinced that they are "divisions superior to the German, both in men and equipment". I know that Rintelen's judgment was very different. Now the Duce hopes for two things: either that the war will end in a compromise which will save the balance of power in Europe, or that it will last a long time, permitting us to regain our lost prestige by force of arms. Oh, his eternal illusions! . . .

JULY 1, 1941. It seems that at Minsk the Germans are now meeting with stronger Russian resistance, which is very much to the Duce's liking. He says: "I hope for only one thing, that in this war in the East the Germans will lose a lot of feathers. It is false to speak of an anti-Bolshevik struggle. Hitler knows that Bolshevism has been non-existent for some time. No code protects private property like the Russian Civil Code. Let him say rather that he wants, with fifty-two ton tanks, to vanquish a great continental power which was getting ready to settle accounts with him."

JULY 2, 1941. A long letter to the Duce from Hitler. It is a résumé of the operations, all of which are favourable even though harder than had been foreseen. The Russian array of

forces is such that one is led to believe that they were prepared to attack. Hitler also proposes a meeting of the two chiefs at his headquarters while operations are still going on. Mussolini liked the idea so much that he accepted immediately.

JULY 3, 1941. I hope that I am wrong, but the star of our Alfieri in Berlin seems to be paling. Von Ribbentrop, who was indignant at Pavolini's visit to Goebbels, has started a serious and laborious investigation into the origins of this visit, and Dino Alfieri will come out of it with his feathers plucked. The affair has amused the Duce, who considers the incident quite serious but who is obliged to laugh at it as he laughs at everything, even those dramatic things that happen to Alfieri.<sup>255</sup>

JULY 4, 1941. Nothing important.

JULY 5, 1941. Meeting of the Council of Ministers. Financial measures were considered, and then the Duce gave a long dissertation on the politico-military situation: The United States will intervene, but its intervention is already discounted. Short work will be made of Russia, and this may persuade Great Britain to yield. The Duce was very unhappy over the almost total loss of the Empire, "for which loss I, Mussolini, have sworn hatred against the British for all time, bequeathing this hatred to all Italians". The reconquest of the Empire will be undertaken at any cost, even if it should impose on us the most extreme sacrifices.

Pavelic has replied on the Montenegrin question: he agrees on the establishment of the 1914 boundaries. I will send Mazzolini the text of the proclamation on the establishment of the frontiers, after which the Constituent Assembly will meet to create the new kingdom of which Mazzolini himself will be the regent. Silimbani gives an interesting exposition of the situation in Tunisia: even the stones are Gaullists, and 80 per cent of the middle classes believe in a British victory. They hate the Germans but admire them; they simply despise us.

JULY 6, 1941. A report from our Consul at Innsbruck informs me of the resumption of German activities, under the leadership of Gauleiter Hofer<sup>256</sup> himself, to keep the Alto Adige

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<sup>255</sup> Allusion to the fact that on one occasion Alfieri was thrashed by a German officer.

<sup>256</sup> Franz Hofer: Nazi Gauleiter at Bolzano.

in their hands. The Duce has been flabbergasted and irritated by it. "Note it down in your diary," he says, "that I foresee an unavoidable conflict arising between Italy and Germany. It is now evident that they are preparing to ask us to bring our frontiers to Salerno and perhaps even to Verona, which will produce a terrible crisis in Italy and in the regime. I shall overcome it, but it will be the hardest task of all. I feel this by instinct, and I now seriously ask whether a British victory would not be more desirable for our future than a German victory. Meanwhile, the British are flying over Germany by day. Bruno Mussolini has told me so, and this pleases me very much. Since we shall have to fight the Germans, we must not uphold the myth of their invincibility. Anyway, I have little faith in our race; at the first bombing that might destroy a famous campanile or a painting by Giotto, the Italians would go into a fit of artistic sentimentality and would raise their hands in surrender. We must thank Graziani; it is to him we owe it if our prestige is declining—and it is, as a matter of fact, already half gone. When the war is over, he will no longer be Marshal of Italy."

JULY 7, 1941. Anti-German resentment on the part of the Duce is still keen. "The Germans insist upon the loyalty of others, but they are themselves incapable of being loyal."

I see Della Giovanna,<sup>257</sup> who returns from Germany. His impressions on the situation are mediocre; little enthusiasm, much uneasiness because of living conditions that are becoming more and more difficult.

The Duce leaves for Puglia.

JULY 8, 1941. I met Admiral Fioravanzo, who is a young Naval ace; he is lively and interesting, though a bit too conceited. He does not conceal his anti-German feelings and is concerned about German hegemony in Europe. He considers our Navy still very efficient in dreadnoughts and cruisers, but believes that submarine operations have received a hard blow from which it will be difficult to recover because of our lack of raw materials. He criticizes our naval armament programme, in which we sacrificed armour for speed.

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<sup>257</sup> Della Giovanna: Italian Attaché in Berlin.



JULY 9, 1941. Acquarone comes to make two complaints in the name of the King: first, that in the proclamation to the Montenegrins we spoke about the Duce and not about the King—and this I remedy immediately, since the proclamation has not yet been published. Second, that the Duce reviewed the divisions returning from the front. This, in the past, was always done by the King. I shall talk about this to Cavallero, whom the Royal House continues to distrust because, according to Acquarone, "he has ambitions which are more of a political than of a military order".

The German advance in Russia proceeds at a somewhat slower pace. Resistance is serious; I saw a set of documents sent by Goebbels in which this is clearly evident.

Buffarini paints a very, very dark picture of our internal situation: anti-Fascism is everywhere taking root threateningly, implacably, and silently. He is preparing a documented report, but does not dare show it to the Duce.

JULY 10, 1941. The Duce has returned to Rome. The Hungarians have annexed the Mura territory, which produced great resentment in Zagreb. I did not conceal my disappointment from Villani, and told him that Hungary will end badly if she follows this line. A country of fifteen million inhabitants, of which five million are people of various minorities, is inconceivable. The Hungarians will have the same fate as all mosaic states.

Naples is bombed, and Cologne very badly also. From the Russian front news is quite serious; the Russians are fighting well, and, for the first time in the course of the war, the Germans admit withdrawing at two points.

The Bulgarian Minister for Foreign Affairs is ill and his visit to Rome will be postponed. I have the impression that the Bulgarians have little desire to talk to us, preferring that the frontiers be established unilaterally, so that they can always contest the justice of the decision, which they could not do if a properly signed pact were made.

JULY 11, 1941. I saw the Duce after a few days' absence. He is well and happy about his inspection of the troops in Puglia. "The Tridentina division," he said, "is superb. I affirm without hesitation that there are no more perfect soldiers in Europe."

An aerial attack on Naples—a very serious one. Not so much because of the number of victims as because of the damage, of which the most serious was the fire at the Italo-American refineries. We lost six thousand tons of oil, and God only knows how badly we needed it. The Duce said: "I am glad that Naples is having such severe nights. The breed will harden, the war will make of the Neapolitans a Nordic race." About this I am very sceptical.

A meeting with Domberg. He is calm but not joyful. Losses in Russia are heavy, and the war may bring us big surprises. His wife is more sprightly than he, and she does not conceal her judgment of the situation. "This is a war," she said, "that we cannot get away with."

News from the Russian front is so-so. The abridged bulletin on the battles of Bialystok and Minsk evidently deals with things that should have happened but did not.

JULY 12, 1941. Nothing new.

JULY 13, 1941. Mussolini is more and more alarmed about the situation in the Alto Adige. He had a meeting with a Signora de Paoli. She preferred Italian citizenship, though she is of German origin and mother of a fallen soldier who had the Italian gold medal. With concrete and irrefutable arguments she completely disillusioned the Duce, stating it was Germany's real decision to annex the Alto Adige immediately after the war if not sooner. The Duce repeated his usual anti-German arguments and concluded by saying that he will bring clearly to Hitler's attention the fact that an event of this kind would constitute "the collapse of the regime".

Notable German progress on the Russian front; the Stalin line has been broken at various points, and the Germans are moving towards Leningrad, Moscow, and Kiev.

Frau Domberg is anti-Nazi but she is German, and therefore I must speak with prudence. Last night she asked me point-blank: "Is it true that you love Mussolini more than Hitler?" To which I replied: "I fear that I do not feel as you do. I love your Führer very much." She was highly embarrassed!

JULY 14, 1941. Disorders in Montenegro. Shooting by armed bands, an assault on the royal villa of Budua. It appears that this has no connection with the Constituent Assembly, but

the coincidence of events is at least strange. In the meantime we have postponed the arrival of the Montenegrins in Rome, and on the King's suggestion the regency will be assumed by three Montenegrins instead of by Mazzolini.

The Duce is furious with the military who "mislead him". They had assured him that the Galileo Factory of Florence would produce eight anti-aircraft searchlights a month, and instead he learned that the first thirteen of them, in two types, would be ready only at the end of December. All this is particularly serious for organizing our anti-aircraft defences. We have had to stop sending Italian workers to Germany because it was becoming more and more difficult for them to live with the Germans, and fights were a daily occurrence.

JULY 15, 1941. We receive particulars on the surrender of Debra Tapor in Ethiopia. In eight weeks our losses amounted to two killed and four wounded out of four thousand men. Notwithstanding that, the surrender took place with full honours. Mussolini affirms that this is one of the "classical Italian *combinazioni*". They have discovered this form of surrender that saves their skins, and which it is easy to obtain from the mercenary British, who thereby also save themselves sacrifices and losses.

In Montenegro things are going rather badly. The capital is isolated and all the roads leading to it are blocked by the rebels. We have sent forces there from Albania.

A strange thing from Mussolini: he has reproached Pavolini because in an article by Ansaldo the latter referred to "the war in Russia, under the direction of Hitler, et cetera . . ." "In this way," the Duce said, "the Italian people is getting accustomed to thinking that it is only Hitler who directs the war." I wonder. Are we playing tiddlywinks, or why not face facts?

JULY 16, 1941. The Duce is not convinced as to the course of affairs in Russia. The tone of his conversation to-day was distinctly pessimistic, particularly as the Anglo-Russian alliance makes Stalin the head of a nationalist Russia. He is afraid that Germany is facing a task that is too much for her, and will not reach a complete solution of the whole problem before winter, which always reveals a lot of unknown factors.

JULY 17, 1941. The Montenegrin insurrection continues;

in fact, it is assuming greater proportions. If it did not have a deep and bitter significance, it would be grotesque that war exists between Italy and Montenegro. We hope that our soldiers will settle it without having to call for German intervention.

Mussolini, as usual, speaks in a bitter tone of the military, and says that he likes only one general, I forget his name, who, in Albania, said to his soldiers: "I have heard that you are good family men. That's all very well at home, but not here. Here you can't do too much thieving, murder and rape."

JULY 18, 1941. Anfuso has had an intimate and very interesting conversation with Frau Mollier, the wife of the German press attaché. She revealed that the Russian campaign has caused a deep crisis in the German ruling classes. Hitler went to war believing that the struggle against Bolshevism might lead the Anglo-Saxon countries to end the conflict. Von Ribbentrop did not agree; in fact, he was convinced that Churchill is ready to make an alliance even with the devil himself if he can only destroy Nazism. And this time he was right. Now the struggle is hard and bloody, and the German people, who are already tired, wonder why. Frau Mollier used harsh terms. She said that Hitler is a blockhead. In fact, the war is harder than the Germans had foreseen. The advance continues, but it is slow, and harassed by the very vigorous Soviet counter-attacks. Colonel Amé and General Squero, who made a report on the military situation to-day, believe that the Russians will succeed in maintaining a front even during the winter. If this is true, Germany has started a hæmorrhage that will have incalculable consequences.

JULY 19, 1941. Some battalions have reached Cettigne, and hence the situation in Montenegro, though it has not been settled, is noticeably improved.

I accompany Villani on his farewell visit to the Duce. The man continues with his anti-German ideas that amuse the Duce just now and do not enrage him. The end of the conversation is less happy. "I am going home because I have reached the age limit," he says. "I'm an old man. I am your age, as a matter of fact one year older." Mussolini did not like this comparison, especially because Villani is the embodiment of old age.

We have fixed the Bulgarian-Albanian frontier by unilateral decree. Stormy weather at Sofia, where the Cabinet talks of resigning. The forthcoming futile visit of the Bulgarian Ministers to Rome begins under bad auspices.

JULY 20, 1941. The Duce continues his anti-German outbursts. To-day he said: "Meditating over the words of Villani, I wonder if at this time we do not belong among the vassal nations. And even if this is not so to-day, it will be so on the day of total victory for Germany. They are treacherous and unbridled. I have proof that the intrigues in Croatia have all been hatched by the Germans. I foresee an unavoidable crisis between the two countries. We must place thousands of guns along the rivers in the region of Venice, because it is from there that the Germans will launch their invasion of Italy, and not across the narrow valleys of the Alto Adige, where they would be easily cut to pieces. For the time being there is nothing that can be done. We are on this road, and we must stay on it. But we must hope for two things: that the war will be long and exhausting for Germany, and that it may end in a compromise that will save our independence."

The news from the Russian front tells of a costly and hard-contested advance. From some reports from Moscow, intercepted from American-Turkish sources, we learn that disorder is beginning to be noticed among the Soviet troops, and that a collapse might now be near. That may be. However, a heavy price has been paid for it, and even if Russia is beaten, what will become of the rest of the world? Is this a decisive victory? I do not believe it.

JULY 21, 1941. The arrival of the Bulgarians: two old-style democratic-parliamentary Ministers, whom the tempest raging over Europe forces to traffic with dictators, uniforms, and parades. They have come to beg for some frontier concessions, particularly in the zone of the Ochrida and Prespa lakes, indispensable for the strengthening of their personal situation in their own country. I have held firm, more for reasons of form than from conviction. Some small concessions may be made at the meeting of the mixed commission. I have seen the King and the Prince of Piedmont, the former more calm and cordial, the latter dissatisfied and critical. Hitler

addresses a long letter to the Duce. It is a summary of military operations in Russia, the course of which he thinks is favourable. It is a broad politico-military survey, and finally—this is the real reason for the letter—asks to take over our air and naval commands. I don't know what they can do more or better than we can. Our Navy, especially, is giving excellent results in proportion to its opportunities and equipment. I do not believe that this request will increase fondness towards Germany in many circles.

JULY 22, 1941. False air-raid alarms continue in Rome. It was the Duce who, personally, ordered an alarm in the capital every time there is an alarm at Naples. He does this because he wants to give the country the impression that a war is on. He has also ordered that at the first opportunity the anti-aircraft batteries should fire in order to make it more exciting. Is all this worth while? If we listen to comments in the streets, I should say not at all. News is more insistent about the approaching British offensive in Libya. Squero considers that there is some truth in the report but doubts whether we can resist a mass shock attack.

Matters in Montenegro are going pretty badly. The rebel forces are being increased by Croats and Serbs, and our divisions cannot keep contact with them. All this is grotesque, but it makes one think a great deal.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1941. I return to the Ministry after a long absence, due to a throat infection which compelled me to undergo an operation. Practically two months of inactivity without contacts with the Duce, except for the very sad day of Bruno's<sup>258</sup> death. I found the Duce well, physically and spiritually. He has recovered from the blow. As always, the main note of his conversation is the military progress of the war. He says that the uneasiness of the Italian people is due to the fact that they are not participating in the war on the Russian front on a larger scale. I cannot agree with him. The people are not interested in this Russian war, and the real misery of our people is due to lack of food, fats, eggs, etc. But this aspect of the situation is not the one that disturbs the Duce.

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<sup>258</sup> Mussolini's son, who died in an aeroplane accident while experimenting with a new type of plane.

It does, however, disturb Serena, who, after all, is now responsible—or at least passes as the one who is responsible—for the food situation. It was a big mistake for the Party to have shouldered this problem—one which will be the foundation of all complaints, because, if to-day the situation is disturbing, it is not difficult to foresee that it will become more acute later on when the lack of fodder and the scarcity of fertilizers further reduce the harvests and production drops to still lower levels.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1941. The event of the day is the measure making industrial and state bonds non-negotiable. Revel plays the victim, says that he knows nothing about it, and that he is against it. The Duce favours it, but more out of spite than from conviction. According to Revel, the individual who inspired this measure is a police informer, an ex-employee of the Bank of Italy, who has written to Mussolini to the effect that he, Mussolini, doesn't have the courage to do what Giolitti<sup>259</sup> did. Volpi is furious and tries with every means at his disposal to block the measure.

I saw Phillips, who has been called to Washington for consultation. He was, as always, cordial. We entered into no particular discussion. He merely emphasized that the American press is no longer attacking Italy. He made mention of the Battle of the Atlantic, which he considers already won by the democracies. Von Mackensen also came to pay me a courtesy visit. We did not speak of politics. Generally speaking, he was calm and spoke in cordial terms about Italian affairs.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1941. The Duce told me that Alfieri put him on guard against rumours that are circulating about the Duce himself. The rumour is that the Duce returned from Germany with a rather pessimistic impression of the progress of operations, and that he expressed himself in harsh terms about the Germans. (In reality he has done this even with me sometimes, but more often in my absence.) Alfieri, when pressed for the source of such information, kept his conversation on a vague and general level, and this made the Duce indignant. Alfieri had talked to me along these same lines with respect to what

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<sup>259</sup> Giovanni Giolitti: Italian statesman, five times Prime Minister; opposed the entry of Italy into the 1914-18 war.

was being said about me. I sent him to blazes, where I frequently send this petty braggart. Nevertheless, the Duce was disturbed by it all, and on October 1st he will speak to the Italo-German Association to deny all rumours of this kind.

I saw a report by Cecchi<sup>260</sup> on the treatment of our labourers in Germany. In certain camps, in addition to beatings, large watchdogs are used which are trained to bite the legs of those workers who are guilty of even slight misdemeanours. If these facts were known to the Italians they would revolt with a violence that few could imagine.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1941. I showed Cecchi's report to the Duce. He was shaken by it and requested me to take this up with Mackensen and to acquaint him with the gravity of what has happened. The Duce added "that I should take the step as on my own personal initiative, without orders from the Duce, who is supposed to have no knowledge of it". I did, in fact, talk with Mackensen, who took his cue from my words to express disapproval of the presence of our workers in Germany "destined to sharpen the deep state of irritation which already exists between our two countries".

I saw Cavallero, who, talking his usual hot-air, admits all the difficulties and concludes with the inevitable "*tout va très bien, Madame la Marquise*". In reality, the Mediterranean situation is dark, and will become even more so because of the continued loss of merchant ships. Commander Bigliardi, who is in the know and is a reliable person, says that in responsible naval quarters they are seriously beginning to wonder whether we shouldn't give up Libya voluntarily, rather than wait until we are forced to do so by the total lack of shipping. From a report by the Duce, of which I have a copy, it appears that German armed units are installing themselves in the principal Italian cities. What for? We must keep our eyes on them.

SEPTEMBER 26, 1941. From other sources, too, the news about the dogs being set on our workers in Germany has reached the Duce, and he was shaken and disturbed by it. "These things are bound to produce a lasting hatred in my

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<sup>260</sup> Emilio Cecchi: Attaché at Italian Embassy in Berlin.



heart. I can even wait many years, but in the end I shall square this account. I will not permit the sons of a race which has given to humanity Cæsar, Dante, and Michelangelo to be devoured by the bloodhounds of the Huns." He suggested that I should meet Ribbentrop and bring this up. I have written a letter making the suggestion to Comrade Joachim!

A short conversation with Acquarone without any particular interest except the fact that the Court atmosphere is becoming more and more sombre, down in the mouth, and anti-German.

The new Hungarian Minister, Mariassy, is the typical example of the classic career diplomat, a busybody, ceremonious and empty. He wanted to address some political questions to me, and began by asking me if I thought that the Axis would win the war! I wonder what kind of an answer he expected in war-time from the Italian Foreign Minister whom he was meeting for the first time in his life. A fine specimen of an imbecile.

SEPTEMBER 27, 1941. Meeting of the Council of Ministers. One has to pay more attention to the Duce's state of mind than to the decisions taken at the meeting. He talked for three hours almost without interruption. His arguments were directed against the bourgeoisie, "against the well-to-do, who are the worst type of Italians". He made a few references to the war and its development, only to say that he now believes that the war will last many years. Bread is rationed at two hundred grammes, with an increase up to three hundred or four hundred for heavy labourers. "Let no one think," he said, "that rationing will end after the war. It will stay as long as I want it to. Only in this way will the Agnellis<sup>261</sup> and the Doneganis eat the same as the least of their employees. If two hundred grammes are little, then I tell you that in the spring the ration will be even less, and this delights me because we will finally see signs of suffering on the faces of the Italian people, which will be valuable to us at the peace conference."

The Duce took delight in the fact that bonds now bear the names of their owners, but his arguments were hardly convincing and technically meaningless. The Council of Ministers

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<sup>261</sup> Giovanni Agnelli: Senator, with controlling interest in the Fiat Company.

remained silent. Only Revel—who loves to call himself the “Red Count”—was satisfied. Grandi, who accompanied me to the Ministry, was horrified by what he called the “white Bolshevism of Mussolini” in which he detected the editor of *Lotta di Classe*<sup>262</sup>, which he had read in school, and which was utterly foreign to his way of thinking.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1941. A long conversation with Gambara. Both the Duce and Cavallero had depicted him to me as an optimist, confident about the future of the industrial company which owned the mining rights in Albania and electric interests in Italy. He is nothing of the kind. He talked to me with a profound sense of responsibility and sees the future full of clouds and dangers. He thinks that, compared to last year, the situation has greatly improved, but it is only a relative improvement, and replacements of raw materials are becoming scarce and more difficult to get. Now they are talking about attacking Tobruk. He thinks this is a serious error, an action in which we may exhaust our best forces, leaving the door open to the inevitable British offensive. It is Cavallero who supports this plan, to please the Germans and the Duce. Therefore, Gambara attacks Cavallero violently, saying that “he was not able to win the esteem of the Army, and wastes his time in vain political activities instead of proceeding with a real organization of the armed forces. If we continue at this pace we will lose the war. This is also the opinion of Roatta and Squero.” Gambara is right. Cavallero is revealing himself a perfect bazaar trader who has found the secret way to Mussolini’s heart, and who is ready to follow this path of lies, intrigue, and imbroglia. He must be watched; he is a man who can bring us great trouble.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1941. Nothing new.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1941. Mussolini is elated at the successes of the expeditionary force to Russia. Our naval victory, most of which is discounted by London, and the prisoners captured on the Eastern Front have cheered the Duce’s heart, who now sees a rosy future, even from the military point of view. But this is typical of the continual ups and downs of his nature.

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<sup>262</sup> “*Lotta di Classe*”, the Class Struggle, a Socialist newspaper of which Mussolini was once the editor.

Phillips is about to leave, and he comes to say good-bye. He talks at length about the discouraged state of mind of the Italians, and ends by repeating the sympathy of America for our country—a sympathy which will be an indispensable help to us on the day of our reconstruction. I made no comment, especially as our military intelligence service has come into possession of the American secret code and everything that Phillips telegraphs is read by our decoding offices, who report that he often gives a false interpretation of events here. This, naturally, paralyses any possibility of a rapprochement with the Americans.

To-day, for the first time, there is a report signed by Alfieri (the real author of the political reports is always Ridomi) which says that the German people are moving farther and farther away from the idea of a total victory and towards the idea of a compromise peace.

OCTOBER 1, 1941. From Munich comes a report from Petralis,<sup>263</sup> which, if it does not paint the situation in dark colours, certainly is not rosy. Of great significance is the clash which is developing between the Prussians and the Bavarians. It is certain that the religious factor is of considerable importance, but also we must not neglect the fact that many food-stuffs have disappeared from the Bavarian market because of the well-to-do Prussians who have taken refuge in Bavaria. And then there are those who are surprised at the Italians becoming irritated with the Germans when they ransack our houses!

A conference with Admiral Ferreri. He is concerned about the fate of Libya, especially if the sinkings of our merchant ships continue to be as numerous as in September. While in the past the percentage of ships lost had reached a maximum of 5 per cent, in September it jumped to 18 per cent. Like all our naval officers, he is outright anti-German.

Inauguration of the academic year of the Italo-German Institute. That simple-minded man, Balbino Giuliano,<sup>264</sup> made a very unconvincing speech on the common traditions of the

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<sup>263</sup> Petralis: Agent of the secret Fascist intelligence service.

<sup>264</sup> Balbino Giuliano: Former Minister of Education.

Italian Risorgimento and the corresponding movement in Germany. The presence of the Duce at this unimportant ceremony is intended as a denial of the rumours spread by Alfieri of a cooling of feelings on the part of Mussolini toward his Axis associate.

OCTOBER 2, 1941. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 3, 1941. Speech by Hitler in Berlin, which was unexpected, or almost so. First impressions are that he has tried to explain to the German people his reasons for the attack on Russia and to justify his delay in ending the war, about which he had made very definite commitments. There is no doubt that he has lost some of his vigour. This time there are no fulminating anti-British threats. As for us, we were given no particular attention; he lumped us with the others, and this will not produce a good impression in Italy, where the wave of anti-German feeling is growing stronger and stronger. Plessen<sup>265</sup> has sent a note to our Ministry, which is rather strong, to point out "that in Greece the people are starving, and that we are responsible for whatever may take place there". The least I can say is that we are dealing with a puzzling document.

De Chirico<sup>266</sup> is painting my portrait. He is a strange man, this artist, opinionated and very timid, at times absent-minded and at times deep and perceptive. His conversation is arresting almost without his being aware of it.

OCTOBER 4, 1941. Mussolini, who is at Riccione, telephones concerning Hitler's speech. He does not like it a bit, "although he is satisfied as far as he himself is concerned". He is provoked by the step taken by Plessen concerning Greece. He says: "The Germans have taken even their shoe-laces from the Greeks, and now they pretend to place the blame for the resultant economic situation on our shoulders. We can take the responsibility, but only on condition that they clear out of Athens and the entire country."

The internal situation, which is bad in many sectors, is becoming serious in Sicily. This region, which has suffered all the woes of war and enjoyed none of its benefits, has been

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<sup>265</sup> Baron Johann von Plessen: Minister attached to the German Embassy in Rome.

<sup>266</sup> Giorgio de Chirico: Italian surrealist artist.

particularly annoyed by the Duce's personal decision to remove Sicilian civil servants from the island. To the misery of the Sicilians has been added what they consider an outrage. Why this was done I do not know. I have seen Gaetani,<sup>267</sup> who wishes to resign his position as vice-secretary of the Fascist Party, and who weeps when he speaks of conditions in Sicily. I have seen Mezzi, who is to be transferred to northern Italy, and who refuses to accept the appointment. He said: "My father is Genoese and my mother is Sicilian. If she were a Jewess I would be Aryanized. In this case, however, there is no indulgence for me. Is it, then, worse to be a Sicilian than to be a Jew?"

OCTOBER 5, 1941. Nothing of importance.

OCTOBER 6, 1941. Mussolini, to judge from what he told me over the telephone from Riccione, is irritated by Hitler's speech. Because he has spoken impromptu he forgives "that which otherwise would be unpardonable".

Squero has had a long conference with me on the situation of the Army. He is not a man with a great breadth of view, but he is honest, and he does not bluff. While Cavallero speaks of dozens of divisions that can be made ready by winter, Squero is of the opinion that we cannot have more than four or five new ones that are really well equipped. Supplies for Libya are becoming more and more difficult. Only twenty per cent of the material set aside for September has been shipped and delivered. On the other hand, the percentage of men is higher: fifty per cent.

A good deal of dissatisfaction because of the food situation. And in some provinces there have been small demonstrations by women, which are difficult to suppress. In Rome they grumble a great deal and are sarcastic.

OCTOBER 7, 1941. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 8, 1941. Some people can be hard-boiled! When I was in Albania, Verlaçi, in the presence of Jacomoni, talked to me about the Albanian Government's intention to offer Cavallero some Albanian soil. At the time I thought that it had to do with the customary urn filled with earth, as with the earth of the Grappa or the water from the Piave, and I

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<sup>267</sup> Gaetani: Vice-secretary of the Fascist Party, a Prefect of Florence.

made no objection. But when I learned that the offer was not symbolical, since it had to do with a grant of almost twenty-five hundred acres of land in Fieri, I definitely opposed it. This did not please the interested parties, who are now trying to twist things around with a letter from Verlaçi announcing the accomplished fact. I spoke to Cavallero about the matter and I will stop it. But Cavallero is not grateful to me. Just the contrary. He cannot realize that for a man like himself, on whose fame as a strategist people disagree, but on whose reputation as a swindler all agree, the acceptance of such a gift would spell his doom. When bread is being rationed and the people are hungry is not the time to announce that Cavallero is celebrating a very dubious Greek victory by accepting a present of a few millions.

OCTOBER 9, 1941. The conditions in Greece, according to Ghigi, are getting so desperate that there is fear the population will get out of hand. The bread ration is already reduced to ninety grammes a day. They have nothing else. If a load of grain does not arrive at Piræus to-morrow, the ovens will be cold. What is the remedy? Ghigi makes no definite proposals, but he declares that, in the first place, it is necessary to straighten out the misunderstandings arising from the division of command between ourselves and the Germans, which paralyses many undertakings and which burdens the food situation in Athens with too many heavy-eating officer thugs. To-morrow I will see Ghigi again. To-day he did not conceal his profound unhappiness, but did not explain himself, saying only that he would like to be transferred.

News from the German front in Russia is more and more favourable. Will this good news be confirmed, or will we, after so many losses in men and material, soon be reading simply that a new front was pushed a hundred or two kilometres farther back? This is what is really important for the whole course of the war.

OCTOBER 10, 1941. Mussolini has returned and is in good humour, especially because of his trip to Bologna and Parma, where he was "received very enthusiastically, once more giving proof of the fact that they are ultra-political cities". On the course of operations in Russia he is reserved. There have

been successes, and that is undeniable, but he considers that the communiqués also bear evidence of propaganda for internal consumption, in view of the approach of a winter which will be hard. This opinion is corroborated by some telegrams from Alfieri, who pours not a little water in our wine and says that there is a difference of opinion between the most conservative military men and the politicians, who are sounding the trumpets of victory. The Duce's whim is to send forces to Russia. He wants to send another twenty divisions there in the spring, because "in this way our war effort will compare favourably with Germany's, and will prevent Germany, in the moment of final victory, from dictating to us as she will to the conquered peoples". I also brought the Duce up to date on the Cavallero question of his property in Albania, and the Duce was deeply and unfavourably impressed.

OCTOBER 11, 1941. Ghigi talks honestly with the Duce on the Greek situation, which is, in a word, hunger. Anything is possible, from epidemics to ferocious revolts on the part of people who know that they now have nothing to lose. Something will be done. Mussolini has given orders that seventy-five hundred tons of wheat be sent immediately. A very small amount compared to the needs for November. But we can do no more. The Italians, too, are pulling in their belts to the last hole: the one that the Italians call the "*foro*" Mussolini<sup>268</sup>—"the Mussolini hole".

The Under-Secretary of the Food Administration said that rations must be further decreased, because there is no choice but to limit further the consumption of food unless we want to do without food for a month. Frankly, this would be too long. Meanwhile, what most concerns the Duce is our absence, or virtual absence, from the Eastern Front. He wants to send twenty divisions there in October, and Cavallero encourages him to do so. But apart from the fact that in the spring we could never, never have twenty divisions ready, would it be wise for us to send the little material that we still have at home and which is our only protection? The King, who is in San Rossore, definitely objects to such a proposal.

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<sup>268</sup> Foro Mussolini: The Italian word for notch or hole is "*foro*". "*Foro*" also means forum, hence the reference is to the Mussolini stadium or Foro Mussolini.

OCTOBER 12, 1941. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 13, 1941. Through Mackensen, Ribbentrop has asked me to join him at Schönhof to go pheasant shooting towards the end of the month.

The Duce received news that during his trip to the Russian front a German is supposed to have said about him: "There goes our Gauleiter of Italy." An employee of the Embassy is supposed to have heard this remark. The Duce wrote to Alfieri to ascertain the truth. Mussolini said: "I believe it. In Germany there are certain gramophone records. Hitler makes them; the others play them. The first record was the one about Italy being the loyal ally, on an equal footing with Germany, mistress of the Mediterranean as Germany was of the Baltic. Then came the second record, the victories suggesting that Europe would be dominated by Germany. The conquered States will be colonies. The associated States will be confederated provinces of Germany. Among these the most important is Italy. We have to accept these conditions because any attempt to rebel would result in our being reduced from the position of a confederated province to the plight of a colony. Even if they should ask for Trieste to-morrow, as part of the German lebensraum, we would have to bow our heads. Now, there is the possibility of a third gramophone record, the one which will be made if Anglo-American resistance makes our collaboration more useful to the Germans. But that is yet to come."

I confined myself to saying that with such a prospect one can easily understand why Italian enthusiasm in this war is so slight.

Serena is worried about the food situation, and he took it out on the Duce, who, agitated as he is, would—if told—make impulsive decisions on the basis of intercepted telephone conversations and anonymous messages which in a short time would cause a dangerous state of disorder. Perhaps the Duce might act differently with me, but I cannot agree with Serena's judgment. Mussolini at times is a little in the clouds, but he is always calm, attentive, and in possession of himself. He also has completely recovered from the sorrow of Bruno's death.

OCTOBER 14, 1941. Nothing new.



OCTOBER 15, 1941. The King sent for me. He had no particular question to ask, and the pretext that he used to the Duce for his talk with me was the Croatian situation. As usual, he gave a cautious but definite opinion on the situation. He is against sending any more Italian troops to Russia, and he deplores Cavallero's talk about the possibility of forming ninety-six divisions by spring. He doesn't believe that we have well-supplied army stores "including three million rifles, which he would like to count for himself, because many of these rifles were given to the Fascist militia, and to the Fascist youth organization, who stole even the bolts of the rifles". He criticizes the militia; the Mantua Legion was abandoned by its colonel, who returned to his unit only when the engagement was over and was booed by his men, "who, in reality, are nothing but civilians in uniform". The internal situation also disturbs him. Above all, he thinks we must avoid any act of force and all incidents that might further exasperate the Italian population, which is already exasperated to the danger point by present restrictions. He fears a German-French agreement at our expense, and he even fears an agreement between London and Berlin. He has no trust in the Germans, and every time he talks of them he calls them "those ugly Germans".

To-day the Duce was under the influence of a talk with General Marras, who confirmed the imperialist plans of certain German social groups, according to whom, after the war, Germany alone will be an armed and industrial power, while the other nations will have to play a more or less agricultural role and become political vassals of Berlin. Mussolini said: "I believe it. The German people are dangerous because they dream collectively. But history teaches that all attempts to unify Europe under a single rule have failed."

Tassinari is very much alarmed and disturbed about the food situation. He fears the worst and would like to hand on his troubles to a successor, on the excuse of being tired and ill. Naturally, I dissuaded him.

OCTOBER 16, 1941. I didn't know Arpinati<sup>269</sup> except through my father, who spoke very well of him. I met him

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<sup>269</sup> Leandro Arpinati: Former Italian Minister of Justice.

to-day and we had a long conversation at the Palazzo Chigi. Before receiving him I informed the Duce, who is very suspicious about those I receive. Among the men of my generation Arpinati is important. I don't know if this is owing to his intelligence, but it is certainly because of his strong character—a somewhat rare gift among Italians. He talked about the past and his misadventures calmly, and, I would say, with pride. He didn't ask to be reinstated or to be forgiven; in fact, without any back-biting he reaffirmed his loyalty to the beliefs which had irritated Mussolini at the time. He is opposed to the Corporative system, is an anti-Communist, an anti-German, but he realizes that no other policy was possible, since, had we followed a different line of conduct, "we would have been swallowed up by Germany like an egg". He was cautious in his judgments on men: only of Grandi he said that he is a traitor and that he, Arpinati, "can knock him off his pedestal whenever he wants to".

Marras had a second conversation with the Duce and said that in German quarters they are quick at making plans: 1942, liquidation of Russia and attack on Egypt; 1943, occupation of the British Isles. I have heard about such programmes many times before, yet . . .

OCTOBER 17, 1941. The taking of Odessa has saddened Mussolini, who now sees himself taking second place to the Rumanians. Every day he vents his anger upon the Italian generals, and particularly upon Graziani, whom he wants to court-martial. The Riom trial has had an influence on him.

Von Ribbentrop invites me to German General Headquarters on the 25th, where Hitler wants to confer with me, and after this to Schönhof for the usual shooting party.

Luncheon at the Attolikos' in honour of Frau Goebbels, who is passing through, accompanied by a sister-in-law. This is how Bismarck addressed Anfuso on the subject: "Frau Goebbels is the typical wife of a high Nazi official. She was first married to a crook, and earned money through prostitution. Later she became Goebbels' friend, but this did not prevent her from going to bed with many of the frequenters of the Party meetings at the Sports Palace. Goebbels married her one night when he was drunk. They have had several children, and maybe some are not his, because Frau Goebbels has continued her

former ways. Now she goes around looking for men, and when she does not suffice, there is also her sister-in-law, who is another prostitute. I am ashamed to think that my wife has anything to do with such people." This is how a Bismarck has expressed himself about the wife of one of the most outstanding men of the Nazi regime.

OCTOBER 18, 1941. According to some sources of information the Germans are beginning to slow down before Moscow. Isn't this a case of their having sung their hymn of victory too soon?

I leave for Ponte Ciano<sup>270</sup>.

OCTOBER 19, 1941. My day was divided between the farms and the sea. Nothing interesting at Leghorn, but the morale of the citizens is low. The approach of winter is viewed with great concern by all. Too many illusions have been built up, purposely or involuntarily, on the shortness of the conflict and on a victory which was supposed to be easy.

OCTOBER 20, 1941. Alfieri reports a long conference with von Ribbentrop, who has sung his usual song: victory is achieved, the Russian Army crushed, England has reached the end of her days. And yet Moscow puts up a very strong resistance and the armoured divisions are at a standstill, many German soldiers are bound to die with their mother's name on their lips before the flag of the Reich flies over the Kremlin. Meanwhile, winter is drawing near, and military operations will soon become very limited.

OCTOBER 21, 1941. Funk<sup>271</sup> and Clodius are in Rome. I had a conversation with the former that was more general than substantial. With Clodius we talked especially about the Balkan situation. He has returned from Turkey and believes that in Ankara they are desirous of keeping to the middle of the road, hoping for a compromise peace. This would be ideal for the Turks: an exhausted Russia, and a Europe in which the balance of power is maintained between Britain and Germany.

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<sup>270</sup> Ponte Ciano: Ponte a Moriano has now changed its name in honour of Ciano's father.

<sup>271</sup> Walther Funk: German journalist and economist. Minister of Trade and Economics. President of the Reichsbank, 1939-45. Arrested and charged as major war criminal in 1945.

To Anfuso he said some hard things about our financial situation: "Italy is running towards inflation and there is no way to stop her course."

Bottai is increasingly pessimistic. His good opinion of the Duce is now violently changed. He said: "My friendship for Balbo was always an argumentative friendship, since our ideas were frequently different. As time goes on I must confess that he was right. I remember that he called Mussolini 'a product of syphilis', and that I used to object to his words. I wonder now if this judgment on Mussolini wasn't correct, or at least very close to the truth. The Duce has decayed intellectually and physically. He doesn't attract me any more. He is not a man of action; he is presumptuous and ambitious and expects only to be admired, flattered, and betrayed."

This is the anniversary of Maria's death, the dear, unforgettable soul.

OCTOBER 22, 1941. Among the many insincere individuals that life puts into circulation every day, General Cavallero easily carries off the palm. Inasmuch as he feels that an ill wind is blowing from my direction, he is now attempting to get round me and at the same time to seek favour. To-day, with his artificial, hypocritical, and servile optimism, he was unbearable. He says that he has solved the problem of motor transport not by giving the troops lorries but by increasing the infantry rate of march from eighteen to forty kilometres a day. Tomfoolery. I protested violently, and he was forced to back down. He then goes on to assure me that by spring he will have ninety-two divisions ready for use. This is a shameless lie. He knows very well that we shall not have even one third of this number. But in this way he spurs the Duce's imagination.

The Duce insists more and more upon sending forces to Russia, suggesting a contingent of fifteen divisions. He has given me instructions to speak to Hitler to this effect during the meeting that we are to have on Saturday, insisting at the same time that our labourers in Germany be replaced by soldiers to be sent to the front. Mussolini holds that in this way we shall acquire greater merit with our ally, who continues to mark time before Moscow.

Del Croix gives vent to his hatred of Germans, and he speaks very freely of the Duce as follows: "For some years now he has missed the mark. He speaks of collaboration with Russia, and the war against Russia breaks out. He says that the march on Rome paved the way for the march on Moscow, but we have not reached Moscow yet. He announces the blitzkrieg, and there is no question but that the war will last many years."

OCTOBER 23, 1941. Cavallero realizes that he has boasted too much, and came to me to water down his previous statements. "It's true," etc., etc., he said, "we can't send more than six new divisions to Russia, and only those if the motorized equipment is furnished by Germany." He states that he has explained the reasons for his change of opinion to Mussolini, but, even if this is true, he got little result, since the Duce confirmed yesterday's instructions, which he expressed in the formula, "more soldiers and less workers". Even with regard to the food situation, the Duce assured Hitler that Italy will get along on its own. "In 1926, when we had to pay our first instalment on our debt to America, one appeal from me was sufficient to bring in the necessary hundred millions. I am certain that even to-day, if I made another appeal, many millions of Italians would sacrifice their bread and meat rations."

Apart from the fact that to contribute a few lire is something very different from giving up one's own already meagre food ration, is Mussolini sure that things haven't changed profoundly in the mind of the Italian people since 1926?

At 8 p.m. I leave for General Headquarters, where I shall meet Hitler on Saturday.

OCTOBER 24, 1941. On my way to Headquarters.

OCTOBER 25, 1941. I arrive at headquarters. Welcomed at the station by von Ribbentrop and by Hitler at the entrance of his fortified cabin. They had told me that he was looking tired and old. This is not true. I found him at the top of his form, physically and mentally. He is very courteous, or perhaps I should say chummy. He quickly invites me into his office, with von Ribbentrop and Schmidt. I have made a report of the conference to the Duce, and it is filed elsewhere. I have also frankly added my own observations, but now I shall

limit myself to jotting down a few episodes and impressions.

Von Ribbentrop speaks in a strangely confidential tone. Usually he is very reserved and dignified, so this surprises me. He goes so far as to busy himself about my personal comfort, and has sent warm, sweetened milk to my room to help my cough. They say in Tuscany that when you are being made more fuss of than usual people are getting ready to cheat you, or you have already been cheated.

He is distrustful of the monarchy. During the pheasant shoot von Ribbentrop asked me point-blank: "What is your King doing?" "He is shooting pheasants," I answered. "No, I mean in politics."

"Nothing particularly interesting. The King is informed about politics, but does not meddle."

"Yet in Court circles they intrigue."

"I deny it most decidedly. Perhaps, at times, they gossip, though only slightly. If you knew the people at Court you would soon realize that but for one or two exceptions they are not even worth suspecting."

"I am pleased to hear this. But you will not say the same about the Prince of Piedmont. That fellow is hostile."

"Not at all. I can give the most ample assurance regarding the Prince of Piedmont. He is young. He has neither the prestige nor the experience of his father, but he is very respectful to the regime, and devoted to the Duce. I beg you, my dear Ribbentrop, don't listen to gossips. They flourish in every country, but are of no account. One must not fish up information from the gutter of public gossip."

It was a splendid shoot. Everything was perfectly organized. The game was driven by four hundred soldiers commanded by their officers, and they all took their task seriously, as if it were a question of ejecting the Russians from the forests of Wiesma or Briansck. If in Italy a Party leader dared to use soldiers for a similar purpose, there would be a tremendous scandal.

At the final dinner Ribbentrop took the floor and spoke very tactfully to the guests and to the organizers of the shoot. He

concluded thus: "Next year, my dear Ciano, our game will be better, not only because we shall kill double the number of animals, but also because Great Britain will have finally realized that she can no longer win the war. In 1943 we shall bring home the first peace-time bag." For a man like Ribbentrop, who has since 1939 been announcing victory in fifteen days, this was a big jump to take.

Roosevelt's speech made a great impression. The Germans have firmly decided to do nothing which will precipitate America's entry into the war. Ribbentrop, during a big lunch, attacked Roosevelt. "I have given orders to the press always to write 'Roosevelt, the Jew'; I wish to make one prophecy: that man will be stoned in the Capitol by his own people." I believe personally that Roosevelt will die of old age, because experience teaches me not to give much credit to Ribbentrop's prophecies.

On our way to the station Ribbentrop repeated a phrase that I have heard many times: "Hitler's New Order in Europe will ensure peace for a thousand years." I remarked that a thousand years is a long time. It is not easy to hang a couple of dozen generations on the achievements of one man, even if he is a genius. Ribbentrop ended by making a concession: "Let's make it a century," he said. For my peace of mind I was satisfied with the reduction, which was certainly considerable.

Domberg, in his cups, said to my colleagues: "Our next colony in Europe will be Hungary. I have hopes of becoming its governor." In spite of the wine, I think that, unfortunately, he was talking seriously.

My general impression of Germany is good; the country is in fine shape. The people are calm, well-fed, well-dressed, well-shod. When the Americans speak of an internal collapse they are mistaken, or, to say the least, they are premature in their judgment. Germany can hold out for a long time yet, especially since there is the spirit of victory; under such conditions revolt will not break out.

I came across a train filled with our labourers—long beards, open shirt collars, bottles of wine, some guitars. They were similar to the immigrants I used to see sixteen years ago in South America.<sup>272</sup> Nothing is changed. Sympathy and esteem for us in Germany are in inverse ratio to the number of our men working in any particular district.

The sight of prisoners of war is a sad spectacle. They can be found everywhere in the open country, and serve in farming families where labourers are lacking. Domborg says: "Every German has his Frenchman," which is equivalent to saying that he has his cow or his horse. They are bound to the soil—slaves. If they touch a woman they are shot. And yet they have the blood of Voltaire and of Pasteur.

OCTOBER 30, 1941. I reported to the Duce. He wished me to send the King a copy of the report I sent from Germany.

Mussolini asserted this morning that now he believes less than ever in the intervention of the United States. "It is quite clear that Roosevelt is barking because he cannot bite." Could he be right?

OCTOBER 31, 1941. Nothing new.

Just now, late in the evening, I read that the American destroyer *Reuben James* was sunk last night west of Iceland. It appears that there were many victims. I fear that the incident this time is of such a nature as to provoke, or at least precipitate, the crisis.

NOVEMBER 1, 1941. A letter has arrived from Hitler, but I have not discussed it at length with the Duce, because the translation has not yet been made this morning, and I did not know its contents. What struck Mussolini more than anything else was that the Führer, throughout the long text, referred but very little to our army divisions. Little politics and a great examination of the military situation. It was a fragmentary and casual examination that does not forecast future undertakings by the Axis, but rather tends to point out the blows which Great Britain may strike at us. Hitler is evidently concerned about us. During the past winter we have

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<sup>272</sup> Ciano began his diplomatic career at the Embassy in Rio de Janeiro in 1925.



had too much trouble to be able to face another lightly. He fears British landings in Corsica, Sicily, and Sardinia, and offers, from to-day, all his support, writing as one who is fully aware what a successful blow by the British may do to us. Fundamentally, the Germans distrust us, and in my opinion this letter is proof of it. Nevertheless, it is the document of a man who is aware of what might happen and who is not free from great worry. He knows that he is playing a difficult game with a strong and dangerous adversary. The letters that arrived after the French campaign had quite a different flavour.

A long conversation with the chief of police, Senise.<sup>273</sup> This is the first time I have spoken with him at length. Until now our meetings have been fleeting and a wary attitude was maintained by us both. After all, he is a sleuth. But to-day I was amused. He is a Neapolitan, a queer mixture of intelligence and ignorance; he follows his natural instincts and is a black-mailer; fundamentally he is easy-going, a chatterbox, superficial, and a gesticulator. It is enough to think that such a man is the chief of police in the twentieth year of Fascism to be convinced that, in this country, *plus ça change plus c'est la même chose*. He might better have been a Minister under the Bourbons. In brief, he tells me that the internal situation is restless, but not dangerous, that Mussolini likes to be deceived by crooks, who are always successful with him, that Buffarini is a hypocrite and a thief because he demands money for the Aryanization of the Jews, and receives money from Bocchini, a bigger thief than he, if possible, and that the Duce's new secretary, De Cesare, has the evil eye as well as being an imbecile. The information is not really very important, but I shall see him more often because it is amusing.

NOVEMBER 2, 1941. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 3, 1941. The Duce is indignant with Pavelic, because he claims that the Croats are descendants of the Goths. This will have the effect of bringing them into the German orbit. Already we have clear signs of this manoeuvre.

A ceremony of the Garibaldi Legion on the Janiculum to

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<sup>273</sup> Carmine Senise: Chief of Police, succeeded Bocchini.

honour the soldiers who fell in 1849. Mussolini delivered a short talk, filled with dark threats against the French. This will not please the French, and will perhaps please the Germans even less.

NOVEMBER 4, 1941. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 5, 1941. Cavallero speaks to me of Marshal Kesselring<sup>274</sup> coming to Italy. He will assume command of the joint forces operating in southern Italy and on the Islands, which means all the combat forces. Cavallero also brings out that this will have ugly repercussions in the country. But personally he would like to draw at least one advantage from it, and gives me to understand that if he is granted the rank of Marshal the trouble might in part be remedied. Mussolini has swallowed the toad. He realizes the meaning of Kesselring's arrival in the general war situation and within the country, but, like a good player, he takes the blow, and pretends that he doesn't feel it.

I accompany Ghigi to the Duce, and he draws a very dark, realistic picture of the Greek situation. He confirms the fact that soon there might be free-for-all shooting in the streets. We must clarify our position with the Germans: it is either they or us. This double-harness situation complicates everything, and prevents a solution of any problem. Mussolini has given Ghigi some encouraging words, and nothing more. Perhaps he couldn't offer anything else.

NOVEMBER 6, 1941. Anna Maria Bismarck said to Anfuso that when General Rintelen went to see the Führer on the Eastern Front he was approached by the German marshals and generals, and that a sort of meeting took place. During the meeting they entreated him to find some way of making Hitler understand that the way the war in Russia as it is being conducted is pure folly, that the German Army is gradually wearing itself out, that it cannot hold on, and that, finally, he is leading Germany to the brink of ruin. It seems that this is the unanimous opinion of all the military leaders, but that no one dares

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<sup>274</sup> Field-Marshal Albert Kesselring: Commander 1st Operational Air Fleet, 1939 Made Field Marshal 1942. Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, 1942-4. Commander-in-Chief, Southern Italy, August to October, 1943. Succeeded Rundstedt as Commander-in-Chief in 1945, captured by the Allies later in the year.

tell Hitler. Naturally, Rintelen, too, was careful not to do so. But if this is true—and it is probable that it is true—it is serious, because in Germany the generals still count a great deal.

To-day Mussolini said, during one of his usual anti-German outbursts: "We can do nothing against Germany for the time being. We must bide our time. It is a country that no one can vanquish militarily, but it will collapse through lack of internal equilibrium. For us, it is a problem of 'holding out' and waiting until this happens."

NOVEMBER 7, 1941. I had not seen Prince Humbert for a long time and to-day he was very cordial. He wanted to know about Germany and listened with a great deal of interest and with an effort to appear impartial, though his prejudice against our Allies was clear: he considers them insufferably crude. Then the Prince spoke about the Armed Forces. He is, or believes himself to be, competent; therefore, his appraisal of the past is severe. He blames Badoglio, but repeats that it was an error to have him dismissed on the strength of the arguments of "any old Farinacci". Badoglio has by now disappeared from the memory and the hearts of the Army, but the moral wound which his leaving inflicted still exists, and it will take time and care to heal it. The Prince's judgment of Cavallero was almost favourable.

I again called Mackensen's attention to what is happening in Mitrovica, in the Kossovo region, where, with the complicity of German propaganda, a small local government has arisen, composed of refugee elements from Albania. This creates confusion and disorder, and attracts all those who wish to disturb relations between ourselves and the Germans. Mackensen agrees. But what can he do about it?

Stalin has made a halting speech which is full of absurdities, such as the one that "the Russian forces proved themselves to be strong and the German forces weak". But, quite apart from this, it is clear that he intends to fight on.

NOVEMBER 8, 1941. The figures sent by our Embassy in Washington on American war production have impressed Mussolini, who has asked that a chart be prepared comparing present production with preceding months. The increase certainly is impressive.

It seems that von Plessen, during dinner at the von Clemms', asked a lady point-blank: "When will the revolution start in Italy?" To which the lady replied calmly: "As you know, we follow you in everything. Therefore, it will take place after it happens in your country." What a charming atmosphere! Baroness von Clemm herself even told Anfuso that the Germans have a right to a warm-water outlet, and so one day they will demand Trieste. Anfuso gave her the twofold advice, not to talk politics, and to dedicate her energies to another occupation in which the Baroness is notoriously something of an expert.

NOVEMBER 9, 1941. Since September 19th we had given up trying to get convoys through to Libya; every attempt had been very costly, and the losses suffered by our merchant marine had reached such proportions as to discourage any further experiments. To-night we tried it again; Libya needs materials, arms, fuel, more and more every day. And a convoy of seven ships left, accompanied by two ten-thousand-ton cruisers and ten destroyers, because it was known that at Malta the British had two battleships intended to act as wolves among the sheep. An engagement occurred, the results of which are inexplicable. All, I mean *all*, our ships were sunk, and one or maybe two or three destroyers. The British returned to their ports after having slaughtered us. Naturally, to-day our various headquarters are pulling out their usual inevitable and imaginary sinking of a British cruiser by a torpedo plane; nobody believes it. This morning Mussolini was depressed and indignant. This will undoubtedly have profound repercussions in Italy, Germany, and, above all, in Libya. Under the circumstances we have no right to complain if Hitler sends Kesselring as commander in the South.

NOVEMBER 10, 1941. The photographs taken by our reconnaissance planes show four British ships moored in the port of Malta. Notwithstanding, it is reported in the bulletin that one of the cruisers has been hit. Pricolo insists upon it, and argues that this ship had been moored near the dry dock. This is equivalent to declaring that a man is probably slightly dead because he has gone to live near the cemetery. Clowns, tragic clowns, who have brought our country to its present

necessity of accepting, in fact, of invoking, outside intervention for protection and defence.

From now until the Germans come, British aircraft will dominate our skies. I have asked Cavallero what will be done to the admiral responsible. Until last night Cavallero did not even know his name. I reminded him that the democratic Italy of Ricasoli<sup>275</sup> had the courage to court-martial Persano<sup>276</sup> when, after the battle of Lissa, he telegraphed that he dominated the seas. I also told Mussolini this; he was discouraged, and is right in considering yesterday the most humiliating day since the beginning of the war. "I have been waiting for a piece of good news for eighteen months now, and it never comes. I, too, should be proud to send a telegram like the one Churchill has sent his admiral, but for too long a time I have been vainly trying to find the opportunity."

NOVEMBER 11, 1941. Irritation and misery because of what has happened persist with the Duce and throughout the country. Mussolini is exasperated and takes it out on the Croats from Spalato, who have thrown bombs at our soldiers. "I, too, will adopt the method of hostages," he said. "I have given orders that for every one of our men who is wounded, two of theirs must be shot, and for every one of our dead, twenty of theirs." But he knows that he won't enforce it.

Galbiati, returning from Greece, said that Greece is not yet at the point of starvation, but will be shortly. The rebellion will begin when the first children starve to death.

Jacomoni proposes that we change the Albanian Government. Kruia<sup>277</sup> in the place of Verlaçi. Which means a further concession to the extremists of Albanian Nationalism. Up to now the results of this policy have not been good; things went better when Benini concentrated authority in Rome. In any case, Mussolini has agreed, and we shall see what will happen.

I read *Parlo con Bruno*<sup>278</sup> by the Duce. It is a collection

<sup>275</sup> Baron Bettino Ricasoli: Italian Prime Minister during the War of Independence.

<sup>276</sup> Count Carlo Persano de Pelloni: Italian Admiral in the war of 1856 against Austria; he was dismissed.

<sup>277</sup> Mustafa Merlika Kruia: Member of the Italian Senate, 1939. Head of the Albanian Administration, 1941-3.

<sup>278</sup> *Parlo con Bruno*: A book Mussolini wrote to commemorate the death of his son, Bruno. He had previously written a book on the death of his brother, Arnaldo.

of articles and various writings held together by Mussolini's style. But this style is very different from that of the book on Arnaldo.

NOVEMBER 12, 1941. At Naval Headquarters they are scandalized by what has taken place in the Mediterranean, but with the present command it is impossible to expect anything better. Bigliardi has described to me the different phases of the encounter. All of this would be inexplicable if it were not known that Cavagnari believes Admiral Brivonesi to be unfit for command. After the battle Riccardi telephoned to Bigliardi and told him that in order to neutralize the bad impression in our country it was imperative to send out a bulletin about successes in the Atlantic. But where were these successes? Relying upon some very uncertain information, a bulletin was drawn up which attributed to the submarine *Malaspina* the sinking of two steamers aggregating ten thousand tons. The only real sinking was that of the Italian submarine, which has been missing from its base for ten days. The assistant head of the General Staff, Admiral Sansonetti, picked up his pencil and increased the ten thousand to thirty thousand, because "this would create a greater effect". Comment is superfluous. The Navy has had the reputation of being serious and honourable and would never before have tolerated such actions without conducting a thorough investigation. Besides, all the Navy knows and repeats that Admiral Riccardi owes his position to the protection of Signora Petacci, and this is certainly not a rumour designed to increase his prestige.

NOVEMBER 13, 1941. Tassinari is more pessimistic than ever in his forecasts. If Germany does not give us five hundred thousand tons of cereals, it will be necessary to reduce the bread and pasta rations by one half, beginning on March 1st until the end of June. Now Mussolini is absolutely against getting wheat from the Germans; he feels humiliation at military developments, including the coming of Kesselring, and he does not wish to add any more reasons for being grateful, and therefore more humiliated.

We have had to change the system of pay for our foreign diplomatic agents, because we have no more foreign exchange and the end of the conflict is still so far away.

Anfuso leaves. He will go as Minister to Budapest. He desired this very much, and now he has been satisfied. I am sorry he is leaving, not so much because of his collaboration as because of his companionship.

NOVEMBER 14, 1941. Alfieri transmits a communication from von Ribbentrop on the behaviour of our labourers in Germany. We must recognize that among them is a noticeable percentage of rascals, idlers, and drunks. Even the Germans make a clear distinction between the northern and southern working-men, and they state that the first do between eighty and ninety per cent of what a German working-man can do and the second not more than forty per cent. Hatred against Germany must be at white heat, in view of the fact that they have gone so far as to say in public: "We shall all march together against the Germans." Von Ribbentrop's communication is harsh but frank, and hence praiseworthy, but not to the point where I feel like thanking von Ribbentrop, as Alfieri would like me to do.

NOVEMBER 15, 1941. Changes in the Air Force Command. It is about time. Pricolo had greatly disillusioned us, and had shown himself increasingly short-sighted, envious, and mean. Fougier<sup>279</sup> is replacing him. At least he is likable and a real pilot, not a balloon officer. He will have as his Chief of Staff Casero, my old faithful Casero, who is certainly an officer who takes his duties seriously. With him things should be better.

NOVEMBER 16, 1941. In Genoa for the dedication of the monument to my father. It was a simple ceremony, an intimate one, for it was thus that I desired it because I do not feel that this is a moment to assemble people in large gatherings. The statue is huge but not very well done; it is by Prini, a Genoese sculptor, who yesterday moved us to pity because he had recently lost a son who was a submarine commander. I recalled when my father lived in the Via Corsica in 1919 he made Genoa the centre of his activities. To see his likeness perpetuated in marble is now a sad but pleasing sensation.

NOVEMBER 17, 1941. No news during my absence. Mussolini tells me that he has persuaded Rommel to hasten the

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<sup>279</sup> General Rino Corso Fougier: Commanded the Italian Air Force.

attack at Tobruk and that it is to begin some time this month. I recall that Gambarà says he is distinctly opposed to this because he fears that when we attack Tobruk this will be followed by a British attack on our flank at Sollum which he feels we cannot resist.

Cavallero informs me that the Duce has ordered an enquiry into the conduct of Graziani. The head of the commission is old Thaon de Revel, and General Ago, General Marmi, and Manaresi are other members. This idea had been fixed in his head for some time. But is this really the time to stir up a hornets' nest?

The King wants the Duke of Spoleto to leave Rome, and Mussolini will inform him through Russo. In fact, the behaviour of this young man is quite absurd. He is living with a well-known society girl and takes her about in his private car. He frequents restaurants and bars and gets tight. A few nights ago, in a restaurant near Piazza Colonna, he put a twisted towel round his head in imitation of a crown, amid the applause of the waiters and the owner, a certain Ascensio, who divides his time between his kitchen and prison. Ascensio happens to be the Duke's best friend. He is a fine man to be a King!

NOVEMBER 18, 1941. A serious matter: Bismarck has told Anfuso that there is some alarm at the German Embassy because it is learned that Pricolo has been removed by the Government because of his opposition to Kesselring's taking over in Italy. This is entirely false. Bismarck, when pressed, declared under the seal of absolute secrecy that the information had been given to Rintelen by Cavallero, who boasted of the service that he had thus rendered Germany. There is no need to comment. This fact is enough to prove what Cavallero is. The real truth is that he had quarrelled with Pricolo for entirely different reasons, and that he has tried to besmirch him in this way.

Mussolini tells me that he has learned from His Majesty that the King of the Belgians has married the daughter of the Governor of Liège, upon whom the King had brought public scorn because he went out to meet the Germans when they invaded Belgium. The King now lives at Laecken in his castle,



and he takes no interest in his Government. "Another sovereign who has been disposed of," says Mussolini, who is becoming more and more anti-monarchical. "This proves that dynasties are a useless inheritance from the past which nations can no longer tolerate."

Meeting at the Palazzo Venezia to carry on negotiations with France. Although the situation is not of the best, I have expressed the opinion that we must do something, especially since the Germans have adopted a conciliatory policy and are grabbing everything.

NOVEMBER 19, 1941. Casertano gives the Duce and me a rather discouraging account of the situation in Croatia. The instability of Pavelic's power, domestic intrigues, and growing German meddling are the elements that make the life of the new State uncertain and our influence precarious. There is no longer an Italo-Croatian problem but an Italo-German problem in Croatia. It is a controversial problem, but we do not wish nor can we afford to draw attention to it.

Bartoli<sup>280</sup> is painting my picture. He is truly a great artist. He is human. His feet are on the ground, and he refuses to follow styles and trends in which he does not believe, even if they would bring him fame and easy money. Besides, he has a rare wit and vivacity. He does not dare touch on certain subjects, but rumour has it that his witticisms are very keen. I know that he recently drew a cartoon in which one sees the Lion of Judah leaving the Rome station while Mussolini says politely to him: "Let us hope the next time you will stay longer." He is pitiless, but those who know him assure me that Bartoli is a good patriot and a sincere Fascist, even if he indulges in biting satire.

NOVEMBER 20, 1941. British attack in Libya. At some points resistance is effective, at others the offensive has penetrated fast and far. Cavallero is optimistic and considers the situation "normal". This is reflected in Mussolini's attitude. I am especially anxious about the lack of supplies and the insufficiency of our Air Force, which during this initial attack has suffered serious losses.

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<sup>280</sup> Bartoli: Pseudonym for Pietro Santi.

Riccardi takes advantage of the occasion when we are selecting a commercial attaché to Spain for a violent attack on Dr. Petacci—the brother of that notorious woman—who, in his opinion, is a crooked speculator. In support of his assertions he repeats this phrase attributed to Leto, the Inspector-General of Police: “Dr. Petacci is doing the Duce more harm than fifteen battles.”

The Germans at Frascati have their eye on the Collegio di Mondragone, and they want to requisition it as a barracks. This is an extremely unpopular measure. The Nuncio has protested, adding that the presence of the Germans at Frascati will counteract the holiness of the Vatican, which would otherwise keep Rome safe from bombing.

NOVEMBER 21, 1941. The battle of Libya is in full swing and our responsible military leaders are optimistic. Churchill in one of his speeches has been outspoken about the objectives of the action but very prudent as to the course of the operations. Nevertheless, we must admit that it is a disturbing speech. The Duce is not of this opinion.

Serrano has sent me a long letter which ends with the proposal of a meeting at Genoa in December. I shall speak of it to the Germans in Berlin. I shall leave to-morrow night, and if they do not raise objections the meeting with Serrano might take place.

NOVEMBER 22, 1941. No positive news about the Libyan battle. Cavallero is undisturbed; Mussolini is definitely satisfied as to how things are going. On the other hand, von Rintelen appears to be worried. The convoy which was to cross last night direct to Tripoli by following the route east of Malta has not succeeded in getting through. The boats under attack from torpedo planes turned back towards Taranto, and at the same time two cruisers, *Trieste* and *Duke of Abruzzi*, were hit by torpedoes. Fortunately they were not sunk. There is no doubt that the task of moving supplies is most difficult, and it is that which keeps our hearts in our mouths.

I leave this evening for Berlin. There are few instructions from the Duce: I must insist on the question of the troops to be sent to Russia. I must clarify Germany's intentions as to

Croatia and Greece. I must not speak of the food problem, and I must reach agreement as to an eventual meeting between myself and Darlan.

NOVEMBER 23, 1941. On my way to Berlin.

NOVEMBER 24, 1941. I have made notes on my conferences and on my impressions of Berlin. I add here something more indiscreet.

The atmosphere of the anti-Comintern meeting was truly singular. The behaviour of the various delegates differed very much. Serrano Suñer was aggressive but quite pro-Axis. The accusation that the Germans make against him of having prevented Spanish intervention is unjust. He really hates the British, the Americans, and the Russians. But he cannot behave properly with the Germans and is sarcastic with them. Bárdossy had a resigned air, and as often as he could he launched a modest and cautious dart against Germany. Mihai Antonescu<sup>281</sup> is a novice in foreign affairs. Until a short time ago he was an unknown lawyer in Bucharest; now he represents his country, and he does it quite well. But he is above all a Rumanian and has an equivocal air. The Danish representative was like a fish out of water—a little old man in a morning coat who wondered why he was there but who, on the whole, was glad that he was there because things might have gone worse. The Germans were the masters of the house, and they made us all feel it even though they were especially polite to us. There is no way out of it. Their European hegemony has now been established. Whether this is good or bad is neither here nor there, but it does exist. Consequently, it is best to sit at the right hand of the master of the house. And we are at the right hand.

Goering was very much offended because of some second-hand gossip concerning our Embassy. After venting his feelings on me the air was cleared. He was impressive when he spoke of the Russians, who are eating each other and have also eaten a German sentry in a prison camp. He recounted the incidents with the most absolute indifference. And yet he is kind-

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<sup>281</sup> Mihai Antonescu: Rumanian Minister of Justice, 1940; Minister of Foreign Affairs and Propaganda, 1942-4. Arrested as a war criminal in 1944.

hearted, and when he spoke of Udet<sup>282</sup> and Moelders,<sup>283</sup> who have lately lost their lives, tears came to his eyes.

A dramatic episode: Goering told me that hunger among the Russian prisoners had reached such an extreme that in order to start them towards the base it is no longer necessary to send them under armed guard; it is enough to put a camp kitchen at the head of the column of prisoners: this emits the fragrant odour of food; thousands and thousands of prisoners trail along like a herd of famished animals. And we are in the year of grace 1941. An amusing episode: The Spanish Blue Legion is sturdy but undisciplined and restless. The soldiers suffer from the cold and they want women. Anti-erotic pills, so efficacious with the Germans, do not have the least effect on them. After many protests the German command authorized them to go to a brothel and had contraceptives distributed among them. Then came a counter-order: no contact with Polish women. The Spaniards in protest inflated the contraceptives and tied them on the ends of their rifles. Thus one day in the suburbs of Warsaw the citizens saw a parade of fifteen thousand contraceptives carried by Spanish legionaries.

The battle of Marmarica has raised us in the esteem of the Germans. For the first time they speak of Italian bravery and of our military contribution. The optimistic outlook on the development of operations was more pronounced in Berlin than in Rome, where we maintain a prudent reserve, though two days ago the Führer considered the battle won.

NOVEMBER 28, 1941. Return by train.

NOVEMBER 29, 1941. I hand the Duce my report. He is satisfied but is in a hurry, and we shall speak of it to-morrow. I accompany him in his car to Villa Torlonia.

The battle of Marmarica has aroused in the Italians more interest than any other episode of this war. This is as it should be. If we win this battle, the British situation may become very insecure, perhaps untenable. Within a short time we may also have favourable and unforeseen developments. England would have to face four major crises: lowering of morale at home,

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<sup>282</sup> General Ernst Udet; Chief of German General Staff.

<sup>283</sup> Colonel Werner Moelders; Nazi air ace killed in plane crash. He was given a state funeral, which Hitler attended.

lowering of prestige with America, a more clear-cut separation from the French, and, finally, a loss of face in the East, with repercussions in Turkey and even in India.

NOVEMBER 30, 1941. Cavallero sums up the Libyan situation. He is aware of its gravity but is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. The hardest problem is supplies. This evening we are going to try to send through a convoy of five ships to break the blockade. How many will get through?

DECEMBER 1, 1941. Out of the whole convoy two ships arrived, one was forced to beach at Suda Bay, and two were sunk. The result is not brilliant. But it might have been worse. The Libyan situation has stabilized somewhat, but the British are receiving reinforcements. Cavallero defines it as difficult but logical. God only knows what he means. Experience tells me that when generals entrench themselves behind unintelligible jargon it means that there is a fly in the ointment. . . .

I have protested to the Nuncio about the publication in the *Osservatore Romano* of some photographs showing that our prisoners in Egypt are having a great time—football, concerts, gaiety. Mussolini is concerned about it. "It is a known fact," he says, "that they are inclined to let themselves be taken prisoners. If they see that their comrades are having such a good time over there, who can hold them back?"

On the advice of the police, who do not guarantee that they can keep order, I postpone my trip to Zagreb until a better time. This time Pavelic will come back to Italy—I believe to Venice.

DECEMBER 2, 1941. Another of our ships has been sunk, almost at the entrance to the port of Tripoli. It was the *Mantovani*, loaded with seven thousand tons of petrol. It cannot be denied that this is a hard blow. The battle—for the moment—has no new developments, but it is clear that time is working against us. My meeting with Darlan has been arranged with Vacca Maggiolini. It will take place in Turin on Thursday. This will be the first political contact with the French since the beginning of the war. I do not believe, however, that very much will come of it, and Cavallero's hope of free transit to Bizerta seems to me doomed to failure.

The Duce is concerned about the food problem. He is now

convinced that we are short of five hundred thousand tons of grain. We must borrow it from Germany. We might be able to pay it back in July, since our harvest, because of the climate, comes two months before theirs. But Mussolini cannot make up his mind to write to the Führer making the request, and I can understand this. If we could do without this help it would be very fortunate, but it seems to me absolutely necessary. The fact is that even those responsible for domestic order—Serena, Buffarini, et al., believe that any more food restrictions would surely cause disorders.

DECEMBER 3, 1941. A stunning move by the Japanese. The Ambassador asks to be received by the Duce, to whom he reads a long declaration on the progress of their negotiations with America, concluding that they have arrived at a dead end. Then, invoking the pertinent clause of the Tripartite Pact, he asks that Italy declare war on the United States as soon as the conflict begins, and proposes also that we sign a pact with Japan agreeing to make no separate peace. The interpreter who was taking down these requests was trembling like a leaf. The Duce gave general assurances, reserving the right to consult with Berlin. The Duce was pleased by the communication and said: "Thus we arrive at the war between continents, which I have foreseen since September 1939." What does this new event mean? Now Roosevelt, who could not get the United States to enter the war directly, has succeeded by an indirect manoeuvre—forcing the Japanese to attack him. Now that every possibility of peace is receding farther and farther into the distance, to speak of a long war is an easy, very easy prophesy to make. Who will have the longest wind? This is the way the question should be put.

The reply from Berlin will be delayed because Hitler has gone to the Southern Front to see General Kleist,<sup>284</sup> whose armies continue to fall back under the pressure of an unexpected Soviet offensive.

DECEMBER 4, 1941. Berlin reaction to the Japanese

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<sup>284</sup> General Paul Ludwig von Kleist: Had a successful army career in the 1914-18 war, but was dismissed from the army in 1938. He was reinstated on the outbreak of war in 1939, served in France, Belgium, Yugoslavia and on the Eastern Front from 1941-5. He was captured by the Allies in 1945.

step is extremely cautious. Maybe they will go ahead, because they can't do otherwise, but the idea of provoking American intervention is less and less liked by the Germans. Mussolini, on the other hand, is glad about it.

I receive a message from Gambara. Naturally, he is offended because Rommel was given command, but apart from this he sees the situation as delicate and filled with unknown factors. Nistri, who is a convinced Fascist and an intelligent officer, is very pessimistic, and adds by word of mouth the things Gambara did not wish to write, that is that our forces are exhausted, that the enemy infiltrates throughout Cyrenaica, and that, finally, we are in no condition to resist another offensive by the British. "Our men die gloriously," he concludes, "which does not change the fact that they die."

DECEMBER 5, 1941. A night interrupted by Ribbentrop's restiveness. After having delayed two days he now hasn't a minute to lose in answering the Japanese, and at three o'clock in the morning he sends Mackensen to my house to submit a draft for a Tripartite Pact concerning Japanese intervention and containing the promise not to make a separate peace. They wanted me to wake the Duce, but I did not do it, and the Duce was very pleased.

I gave Mussolini a copy of Gambara's letter, in which, however, I omitted the anti-Rommel phrases. The Duce is now so proud of having given the command to the Germans that he would have been very angry with Gambara—and Cavallero is urging him on to this in any case. He dislikes Gambara. They have entirely different natures. One is a soldier, the other plays politics.

DECEMBER 6, 1941. A few words in reply to Gambara, words of friendship and good wishes. But things in Libya are not going well, and I fear that sad days are near at hand.

DECEMBER 7, 1941. Dark news from Libya. Our forces are no longer such as can attempt a long resistance; they must break contact with the enemy, and break it decisively, in order to try to defend the Gebel. Mussolini is calm; in fact, he talks about the possibility of a counter-attack. Cavallero, on the other hand, is obscure, and thinks that it all depends on cession of the port of Bizerta by the French. I am supposed to speak

about it to Darlan on Thursday, but during the evening Mackensen comes to tell me in Ribbentrop's name that I must start no such negotiations with the French. This is Hitler's wish, communicated to Mussolini through Rintelen.

Hitler is right: Tunisia is de Gaullist 101 per cent; any unwelcome pressure would in itself accentuate the separation which is developing between the French Empire and the Government of Vichy. But without Bizerta Libya is lost; so says Cavallero.

This morning the Duce was very much irritated by the paucity of losses in East Africa. Only sixty-seven fell at Gondar in November; ten thousand prisoners were taken. One doesn't have to think very long to see what these figures mean.

DECEMBER 8, 1941. A night telephone call from Ribbentrop; he is joyful over the Japanese attack on the United States. He was so happy, in fact, that I congratulated him, even though I am not so sure about the advantages. One thing is now certain: America will enter the conflict, and the conflict itself will be long enough to permit her to put all her potential strength into action. This is what I said to the King this morning, when he, too, expressed his satisfaction. He ended by admitting that in "the long run" I might be right. Mussolini was glad. For a long time now he has been in favour of clarifying the position between America and the Axis.

It seems that in Libya things are going a little better. In the Duce's judgment the gloom of the last forty-eight hours has passed. Cavallero, as well as Admiral Riccardi, announce a great naval operation against the blockade for the 12th, 13th, and 14th of this month. All the ships and all the admirals at sea. May God help us!

Mackensen sends me the résumé of the meeting between Goering, Pétain, and Darlan. It accomplished nothing, only words, suggestions, advice. I don't think my meeting will have any better results.

DECEMBER 9, 1941. I go to Turin to await the arrival of Admiral Darlan.

DECEMBER 10, 1941. I took notes on my meeting with Darlan. My impression of the man was good. He is a small man, energetic, wilful, and rather boastful, who talks without



reticence and calls a spade a spade. He is a sailor who is beginning to develop a taste for politics, and because he is French, he does it with a certain finesse. Is he sincere? I can't say, except for one thing: he hates the British. Some ways of speaking and some expressions cannot be simulated. On the other hand, there is no choice for him, and he declares it: if the British should win the war, his fate would not be a happy one.

Results of yesterday's meeting: none, except a clearing of the atmosphere which, with the French, it is not difficult to achieve. It is enough that we meet. In order to have bad relations with them, all we have to do is not to meet. And this has always been the recipe used by Mussolini for a break. He himself, when he spoke to them, could not prevent a rapprochement. Even the population of Turin was cordial to the guests; there was some scattered applause.

News of the amazing Japanese naval victories continues to arrive. Against this, the land-fighting in Libya and in Russia is not going well. Such are the incredible surprises of this war.

DECEMBER 11, 1941. Mussolini is very little interested in my discussions with Darlan. It is the American war that occupies him. At 2.30 p.m. I receive the Chargé d'Affaires, a good man, somewhat timid, with whom I have had little to do. He thinks that I have called him to discuss the arrival of certain journalists, but I disillusion him immediately. He listens to the declaration of war, and turns pale. He says: "It is very tragic." Then he hands me a personal message from Phillips. Feeling that zero hour was approaching, he had telegraphed to express his gratitude and his good wishes. Phillips is an honest man, and he loves Italy. I know that for him this is a day of mourning.

Mussolini made a speech from the balcony—a brief and cutting speech, heard by a great crowd. A very pro-Japanese setting. News of the naval victories has excited the Italian imagination. The demonstration, however, was not very enthusiastic. We must not forget that it was three o'clock in the afternoon, the people were hungry, and the day was quite cold. These are all elements which do not make for enthusiasm.

In the evening Ribbentrop asks that we join a German

proposal that the countries of the Tripartite Alliance declare war on the United States. How about Spain?

DECEMBER 12, 1941. The Vichy press spoke with cordiality about the welcome of the French in Turin, and this rasped the Duce's nerves. I gave Mackensen the report of my conversations with Darlan, underlining the need to send a political representative to Vichy to remove from the Armistice Commission the political functions which do not belong to it, and which generals do not always know how to exercise.

DECEMBER 13, 1941. The usual naval woes. To-night we have lost two five-thousand-ton cruisers: *Barbiano* and *Giussano*, and also two large ships, the *Del Greco* and the *Filzi*, loaded with tanks for Libya. This happened even before the great convoy (accompanied by battleships) had ever put out to sea. What is happening in the Navy is baffling, unless what Somigli says is true, which is that our General Staffs are possessed by an inferiority complex that paralyses all their activities. The fact is that our naval losses become more serious every day, and I wonder whether the war won't outlast our Navy.

The Cuban Minister came to declare war. He was very emotional, and was disappointed that I did not share his emotion. But, after having had the good fortune, or is it the misfortune, to declare war on France, on Great Britain, on Russia, and on the United States, could the good man really think that I would turn pale on learning that Sergeant Batista<sup>285</sup> was mobilizing against us the forces of Cuba on land and sea and in the air? Ecuador, too, has declared war, but I instructed my secretary to receive the Minister.

DECEMBER 14, 1941. Cavallero justifies our naval defeats with an impudence that can't be equalled. He has become the defender of the office of Admiral Riccardi, and this morning I had to listen to endless explanations. It is strange that this Piedmontese general should have the mentality of a Neapolitan deputy.

Mussolini is calm. This morning he joined for a long time with me, then assumed a tone of impersonal argument. He

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<sup>285</sup> Fulgencio Batista y Zaldivar: President of Cuba; formerly Sergeant-Clerk in the Guardia Rural.

got angry about Christmas, Christmas gifts, and the gifts of all holidays in general. He says that the offering of gifts is the alibi of the rich to justify their good fortune in the eyes of the poor. The fact is that in these days the people feel the lack of food more than ever, and complain, but Mussolini, as is his custom, takes it out even on the Almighty when things go wrong.

I leave for Venice, where I will meet Pavelic. He will ask for many things, but I know already that I shall have to refuse them all. I shall use good manners, and sugar-coat what I have to say, but its substance will have to be negative.

DECEMBER 15, 1941. I have had the usual stenographic transcriptions made of the conferences.

Impressions: Pavelic is growing more and more confident as he continues to rule. He is more resolute, casual, and calm. He has complete domination over his Ministers and even treats them harshly. In my presence he reproached his Finance Minister, who blushed to the roots of his hair and hung his head.

It all depends on the Germans. If they keep their obligations under which Croatia has become a zone of Italian influence, a great deal can yet be accomplished by us. If, on the contrary, they should again try to force our hand and press their penetration, there is nothing for us to do but to haul down our flag and return home. The Croats are very sympathetic toward us. Pavelic also likes us, but all of them are terrorized by the Germans, and it does not even occur to them to offer resistance to any pressure from Berlin.

The monarchical question has for the moment been laid aside. That does not displease me, especially because I still think that it is possible to have a real union under our King. Naturally, all this is premature, and we should always have to give the most ample guarantees of local independence. Army, diplomatic corps, police, courts, all must be geared to an imperial system which in the beginning would be easier to achieve in practice than to define by constitutional formulæ.

In brief, it seems to me that the boat continues to float with some difficulty, and that it begins to unfurl some timid sails. We are far from the end, but something has been done, and as for the future, everything will depend upon ourselves and upon the men who work for us in Croatia.

Venice was sad, empty, tired. Never have I seen it so squalid. Empty hotels, deserted streets. Fog. Misery. Darkness. I have only vague memories of the Venice of the other war, but it was not at all like this. If nothing else, there was the sentimental attraction of a front-line city.

DECEMBER 17, 1941. I confer with Mussolini, who was very sceptical before about progress in Croatia. He is glad now, especially since the Germans have asked us to assume territorial military control over the whole country. This is certainly due to the fact that the Germans have to withdraw their divisions, because in Russia the winter threatens to be hard, and Serbia would give them too much trouble, although it also proves that Croatia is really considered, by Berlin, as our lebensraum. Mussolini wants to accept the proposal immediately. Roatta, who two days ago took Cavallero's place in Libya, is in favour, but asks if he may not study the proposal, because he fears that the available military forces may not be sufficient, and he does not want to start something he cannot finish.

Things are not going well in Libya. Even Mussolini is beginning to admit it, and he blames Rommel, who, he believes, spoiled the situation with his recklessness. To-day the whole fleet is at sea, and Riccardi believes that a clash with the British is inevitable. He says that we are definitely superior in quantity and quality, and he promises success—the success we have been waiting for so long in vain. Can it be that our luck will change?

DECEMBER 18, 1941. The convoy has gone through without battle and without trouble. On the other hand, the situation is reaching a crisis in Cyrenaica. The headquarters and motorized forces are withdrawing to Agedabia, while the infantry is turning towards Benghazi, where the General Staff is thinking of forming an entrenched camp and resisting as the British did at Tobruk. Can this be possible in view of the fact that we have not got control of the sea as they had? I am somewhat sceptical about it.

A meeting at the Palazzo Venezia to extend our occupation to all Croatia. On the military plane it is a question of troops. We must send strong forces because a revolution may break

out in the spring, when the woods afford cover and concealment. If we undertake to garrison the country we must do it completely. However, this does not concern me and I am not interfering with it. Politically I have expressed my opinion that we must do things simply: communicate to the Croats that because of a special decision of the Axis command the Germans are leaving and we are arriving. We should avoid at all costs presenting the decision as a success gained by us. That would mean putting all Croats against us.

DECEMBER 19, 1941. News is still bad in Libya, in spite of the official optimism of our General Headquarters. God confound servile optimists! They are the ones who have cooked our goose. They have ruined us. In the meantime, Rommel announces that he, with his slender armoured resources, will break into Tunisia, because he does not wish to be made prisoner by the British. All this while Cavallero continues to swear that nobody can make him fall back from the wastes of the Sirte, and Mussolini believes him.

I saw Verlaçi, who spat venom when talking about Jacomoni, and this is natural, because he was shown the door. It is the way in which it was done that most offends him. He would have desired longer notice, but even this would have been a double-edged sword. He says that now matters are troubled in Albania, and that the people are dissatisfied. He might be exaggerating, but there must be something to it. However, when I asked him what remedy he could offer, he had none to suggest. Jacomoni, with whom I conferred at length, is not pessimistic, and believes that, with good steering, we can set our ship on its course again. So far he has never been mistaken.

DECEMBER 20, 1941. Mussolini is satisfied with the way the war is going in Russia. He talks about it openly. The failure of the German troops cheers him. "As long as this doesn't go too far," I suggested. He even called Alfieri to Rome to learn more about it. Nothing new in Libya about what had been forecast yesterday. The official slogan is that if the Littorio division is brought to the African shore we shall be in Sollum in a few days. Let's hope so.

Mackensen informs us that the Germans not only approve our sending a representative to Vichy, but are in favour of our

sending an ambassador to Paris, in a position identical to that of Abetz. I asked Buti if he was willing to go, but up to now he has raised many objections. Truly, I can't make it out.

DECEMBER 21, 1941. The Duce approves the sending of an ambassador to Paris and the choice of Buti. The latter has now overcome his instinctive timidity and has accepted. I have informed von Mackensen of all this and intend to draw up an official communiqué with him.

I am informed by Cavallero of the development of operations in Cyrenaica. As usual, he finds everything "logical". He says that it is due to him that all our infantry has not fallen into the hands of the British. He repeats that we shall hold firm at Agedabia and he denies any danger for Tripolitania. Let us hope that he is right. On the other hand, he considers the situation of the Germans on the Russian front quite difficult. Bismarck has communicated to d'Aieta that Brauchitsch has been got rid of. It's a sign of a serious crisis, because in Germany the General Staff is of real importance and has an enormous following in the country.

Goebbels' and Hitler's messages have not made a good impression. The humble but pressing request for warm clothing for the soldiers on the Eastern Front is in direct contrast to the arrogant tone that up to now has characterized their speeches. It also proves the Germans are unprepared for a winter struggle.

DECEMBER 22, 1941. The liquidation of Brauchitsch is the topic of the day. British and American radios talk of nothing else. The German Embassy is staggered by the news. Mackensen expressed no opinions, but didn't hide his concern. Bismarck didn't conceal his joy, and turning to Anfuso he said: "We have come to the fifth act of the great tragedy. This goes to show that Hitler is a blundering ass." The young man is exaggerating, but he isn't the only one in Germany who plays at opposition. The crisis is in the regime itself; it isn't only between individuals. Cavallero also told me that General Rintelen is very reserved on the subject.

Mussolini does not attach very great importance to the matter. He believes, in fact, that in the last analysis it will be advantageous because "this war has proved the importance

of political manoeuvres in controlling armies and this is another political manoeuvre." I wonder if this is the proper moment for it—between frost-bites and Russian beatings. Mussolini has again attacked Christmas. He is surprised that the Germans have not yet abolished this holiday, which "only reminds one of the birth of a Jew who gave the world debilitating and devitalizing theories, and who especially contrived to trick Italy through the disintegrating power of the Popes". He has prohibited newspapers from mentioning Christmas, yet you only have to look out of the window to see that the people remember it and love it just the same.

DECEMBER 23, 1941. I accompanied Verlaçi to the Duce's. He did not behave well. He attacked Jacomoni fiercely, and also requested that he be replaced by Guzzoni, who, in a few months, would be capable of eating up not only Albania, but all the Balkans as well. He naturally detests Kruia, but he has no solid arguments against him. He confines himself to saying that a country cannot be governed by a man who is the son of a servant who had waited on Verlaçi himself in the home of Essad Pasha.<sup>286</sup> Verlaçi is a feudal lord, and those things that to us may appear to be prejudices are sacred principles to him.

Serena and Tassinari have insulted each other in the Duce's presence, and almost came to blows in the ante-room. It seems that the Duce is about ready to get rid of Serena, pushed on by Buffarini, who, as always, works in the dark. He is a snake. I have seen a letter he has sent with the curriculum vitæ of Serena's eventual successor. The Duce opened it in my presence. Buffarini has denied to me having sent such a letter, but I believe in my eyes more than in his word.

Von Mackensen comes, on the advice of von Ribbentrop, to ask my personal opinion on the approaching tripartite meeting with Darlan. He says that we must talk politics. I answer that such a conference, if it has an exploratory character, should be harmless and useful.

DECEMBER 24, 1941. Nothing new in foreign policy or on the war fronts.

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<sup>286</sup> Essad Pasha: Albanian-born Turkish general and politician

At home, attention is beginning to concentrate on Serena, who has not been received by the Duce for two days. Candidates are cropping up. Riccardi has his name proposed by Osio,<sup>287</sup> but the Duce has not spoken to me of the dismissal and I am not taking any initiative on the question. I should indeed consider a Riccardi secretariat a real disaster.

Serena, whom I saw in the afternoon, still believes in the plot by Buffarini, who now has the Duce in his hands and manoeuvres through indirect and disloyal channels. He intimates that on the pretext of compensation he gives more than one hundred thousand lire a month to the Petacci woman, upon whom, meanwhile, he exerts influence by means of a certain Donadio, whose role is not clear. Indeed, Serena says that the Petaccis have formed a ring around the Duce, which is manipulated in the background by Buffarini and served by de Cesare, who is acquiring more influence every day and acts in a sinister fashion. Serena is unperturbed. He wants a decision as soon as possible because he does not consider it good for the dignity of the Party that the secretary should be allowed to stew for so long a time.

DECEMBER 25, 1941. Alfieri writes that the disasters on the Russian front have gone farther than is desirable for us. I glean this from the Germans at the Embassy. They are very much discouraged. The Duce, who in the beginning underestimated the problem, now affirms that it is serious and that perhaps it will have further consequences.

The Pope has delivered a Christmas address, and naturally it did not please Mussolini, because he found that out of the five points it contains, at least four are directed against the dictatorships. This is unavoidable, in view of the anti-Catholic policy of the Germans. Isabella Colonna told me last evening that she had recently spoken with Cardinal Maglione, who told her that at the Vatican the Russians are preferred to the Nazis.

Anyway, the Duce increasingly reveals his anti-religious attitude. The Christmas holidays afford him a pretext. "For me," he has declared, "Christmas is nothing more than the 25th of December. I am the man who in all this world feels

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<sup>287</sup> Osio: President of the Italian Bank of Labour.



these religious anniversaries least." To prove it he has made a list of appointments which is longer than usual. This year, however, the crowds in the churches are overflowing.

DECEMBER 26, 1941. Serena and Tassinari have been replaced. The first is going to the front, and the second is returning to his university teaching. Pareschi,<sup>288</sup> who is a technician, and who seems good to me, even though he talks too much and is ambitious, is going to the Ministry of Agriculture; a certain Vidussoni,<sup>289</sup> who has the gold medal, is twenty-six years old, and a candidate for a law degree, will become General Secretary of the Fascist Party. I know nothing else about him. Obviously this is an audacious experiment, and we hope that fortune will this time be a faithful companion to audacity. I know nothing about him, and haven't even seen him.

Vacca Maggiolini has come to tell me that he has received instructions from the Duce to begin conversations with the French with a view to obtaining Tunisian ports, such conversations to be of a political character. This surprised me for two reasons: in the first place, because our understanding with the Germans is different, or at any rate nothing has been settled with them; and, in the second place, because just a few days ago Mussolini told me that Vacca Maggiolini is an imbecile who should not concern himself with politics. Naturally, I advised Vacca Maggiolini, who asked me what to do, to follow the Duce's instructions to the letter.

DECEMBER 27, 1941. Council of Ministers. The Duce summarizes the military and political situation. He says nothing that is new to me. He foresees a very long war, lasting at least four to five years, and believes that humanity is moving towards complete "proletarianization". He distinctly undervalues America and her real weight in the conflict.

I received Vidussoni, whose appointment has aroused a unanimous feeling of astonishment. From the golf caddies to Count Volpi, everybody is commenting on it sarcastically. Until now very few knew him. Bottai, Russo, Host Venturi

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<sup>288</sup> Pareschi: Italian Minister of Agriculture.

<sup>289</sup> Aldo Vidussoni: Leader of the University Militia; Secretary-General of the Fascist Party.

have all taken the trouble to say that he is a nincompoop. I cannot yet judge. I have talked with him for about half an hour, and the conversation remained more or less vague. He seems enthusiastic and loyal, but is a novice. He will sweat blood in that environment of old whores which is the Fascist Party. I have spread the denial that he is a creature of mine, as was beginning to be rumoured. Not at all. Let it be clear that he has come out of the mind of Mussolini as Minerva sprang from the brow of Jupiter.

Gambara, in a letter addressed to me, assures me that if "supplies" arrive Tripolitania can be saved, and he is vindictive about Rommel, who, "as leader, is a flop".

DECEMBER 28, 1941. Indelli reports from Tokyo that the Prime Minister of Japan has made some discreet allusions to the possibility of a separate peace between the Axis and U.S.S.R. Mussolini has dashed headlong into an examination of the problem and is very much in favour of the idea. The vicissitudes of the war, particularly the recent ones, have convinced him that Russia, that ocean of land, may have innumerable surprises in store. He is right. But I do not believe a separate peace is possible. The manner of the German attack, the German declaration of the objectives of the anti-Bolshevik war, the development of events, all seem to preclude this possibility.

We learn from Berlin of a British landing in Norway and of a Russian landing in the Crimea. There is no alarm, the German Embassy reports, but the two incidents are not at all under-estimated.

The Germans have changed their minds on the Croatian question. They will no longer withdraw their troops, but simply offer a military collaboration with us. Perhaps this is not bad, because in the spring Bosnia, Serbia, and Montenegro will give us plenty of trouble.

DECEMBER 29, 1941. Mussolini says that he will write to Hitler about the Tunisian ports; either France comes to an agreement with us and grants them, or it will be necessary to take them by force. I hope that he doesn't write the letter, because it would bring no good results.

Bismarck talked to d'Aieta about the nomination of Vidussoni.

It has made a very bad impression in German quarters, and particularly at the Embassy, where they have had an opportunity to know the youth and to see that he is poor stuff.

DECEMBER 30, 1941. The letter to Hitler about the Tunisian ports was written and sent through Rintelen. I am certain that Hitler's reaction will not be good, especially since news from the Russian front has been anything but favourable. Even Mussolini is concerned about it. He believes, and with good reason, that the physical factor is predominant, and that the Germans will succeed in creating a wall of resistance against Russian pressure only if they are in good physical condition. This is his chief conclusion, but it is certain that the German situation is not at this moment very rosy.

Mussolini asks me to go to Bologna to speak there on January 3rd. He realizes that Vidussoni's nomination has shaken the old Fascism and now he wants to do something that will temper the reaction.

DECEMBER 31, 1941. At the Russian Front things are still going badly.

I see Kesselring, with whom I have a more or less formal conversation.

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JANUARY 1, 1942. Cavallero comes to see me on a number of pretexts, but actually because he wants the Germans to know through me that he is not responsible for the Duce's idea of attacking Tunisia. As a matter of fact, it was he who put it in the Duce's head.

A letter arrives from Hitler. It crossed the Duce's letter. It is a long résumé of how things have gone in Russia; mostly excuses, not explanations. The tone is courteous and vaguely subdued in regard to Italy. Very different from the tone used last year about this time, when we were fighting our war in Albania.

Alfieri came to the Palazzo Venezia. He paints a vague and disjointed picture of the situation in Germany. He knows nothing and says nothing, and does it with a lot of words.

JANUARY 2, 1942. Nothing new here. We hear from our Embassy in Berlin that news from the Russian front is steadily worse, but Mussolini doubts its accuracy.

Talking with Alfieri he said: "Tell the Germans that three years from now Italy will still be in the war under exactly the same conditions as to-day."

It does one good to find a dissenter. To-day Barella<sup>290</sup> said that the appointment of Vidussoni has been well received in the country!

JANUARY 3, 1942. I was in Bologna for the celebration of January 3rd and made rather a long speech at the Medica Theatre. I curbed the publicity for my speech for the following reasons: I had nothing new to say; I think the less one says at the moment the better; all my colleagues in the Government were speaking in other cities and it wasn't advisable to arouse or accentuate jealousies by disparity in treatment. The audience listened with attention and applauded warmly, but without complete conviction. Even a Fascist audience reasons, doesn't get excited, wants to understand things. The warmest acclamations were for Hitler and for the King. The Duce, in Bologna, is one of the family.

On my return I met von Mackensen on the train returning from Germany. He didn't say much and was depressed; the retreat in Russia weighs heavily on every German, almost as if it were a personal misfortune.

JANUARY 4, 1942. The Duce gives unusual praise to my speech at Bologna. There is no news except the sailing of a convoy to which are entrusted our arms and hopes for the resistance in Libya.

JANUARY 5, 1942. Mussolini to-day repeats his praise of my speech, but shows me a cutting from the *Resto del Carlino* which criticizes my Fascist salute, which was not according to regulations. Is there really nothing better to think about? Vidussoni comes to see me. After having spoken about a few casual things, he makes some political allusions and announces savage plans against the Slovenes. He wants to kill them all. I take the liberty of observing that there are a million of them.

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<sup>290</sup> Guilio Barella: Director of "Popolo d'Italia"; trustee of Mussolini's personal fortune.

"That does not matter," he answers firmly; "we must imitate the Askari<sup>291</sup> and exterminate them!" I hope that he will calm down. Now they say that the motto of the Party is no longer "Book and Musket", but "Book and Youngster".<sup>292</sup>

The convoy has reached Libya without being attacked by air or sea. This will stimulate resistance.

The police advise against my trip to Zagreb. The situation is not good, and there has been shooting in the vicinity. On the other hand, I should not like to disappoint Pavelic, who is expecting me. I have telegraphed Casertano to get his opinion.

JANUARY 6, 1942. Mussolini is indignant with the Germans for two reasons—because General Schmidt, who was taken prisoner at Bardia, declared to the correspondent of the Daily Herald that he could not hold out because he was commanding Italian soldiers, but it seems that it was Schmidt himself who took the initiative in giving up. And because the Germans in Rumania, according to Antonescu's communication, took for themselves the oil which was meant for us. This is why Mussolini called them "highway robbers".

Our public-relations officer with the second army in Croatia sends bad news of the situation and about the morale of the troops. Some units permitted themselves to be captured without firing a shot.

Ravasio comes to pay me a visit. He was appointed Vice-secretary of the Party by the Duce, with instructions to function as "supervisor of orthodoxy and policy of the Party"—an assignment which is obscure, difficult, and indefinite. Ravasio, whom I know very slightly, has the reputation of being a Savonarola, who, in the Cova Café and in the columns of the *Popolo d'Italia*, has uttered thunderous threats against the lukewarm members of the Fascist party. But who are the lukewarm, the so-called impure? It is so easy to engage in paper demagoguery, but, in reality, whom are we supposed to be accusing? Let them first name names and prove guilt; then, and only then, let them bring out the rope. I put the question up to Ravasio, and he himself was able to give me no more disturbing

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<sup>291</sup> Askari: Negro soldiers from Italian colonies.

<sup>292</sup> Pun—"Libro e Moshetto"—"Libro e Maschietto".

example than that of a butcher who dug up and sold a hog declared by the vet to be infected. A bad thing, to be sure, but not a matter to justify an accusation against the whole class of Fascist leaders.

JANUARY 7, 1942. Nothing new.

JANUARY 8, 1942. Nothing new.

JANUARY 9, 1942. Anti-Italian demonstrations at Zagreb. Everything tends to discourage the visit. I must go another time.

Mussolini is concerned about the fate of the four transatlantic liners, which are supposed to go to Ethiopia to bring home a first group of Italians who had been sent there for colonizing and public works after the Ethiopian occupation. He fears that the British will stop the ships at Lisbon on their return and seize them. I do not think that the British Government will want to be guilty of breaking promises. In any case, since the Duce feels as he does, I cannot assume the responsibility, and I leave the decision to him.

Acquarone talks to me about the Duke of Spoleto. The Duke doesn't give a damn about Croatia, and wants only money, money, and more money. On the whole, it is to our interest to hand over at least a little. I shall propose to the Duce that we give him a hundred thousand lire a month.

JANUARY 10, 1942. Mussolini sticks to his point regarding the ships we are sending to Ethiopia. However, he does not want to take on his shoulders the weight of a refusal, and he instructs that we should postpone decision in this case without breaking off negotiations.

My article on Albania has received favourable comment and, strangely enough, even the German press has laid stress on it as an expression of the policy of the Axis. Nevertheless, it does not seem to me that it really exemplifies their line of conduct in the occupied countries.

JANUARY 11, 1942. Germany is in a state of nerves. The denial made to the foreign press about disorders at home is the proof of it. The Duce deplures it. He says: "Had I ever denied that I fought a duel with the heir to the throne, the people would have really begun to believe it." Alfieri sends bad military news and telegraphs that the divisions withdrawn from

the Russian front are stationed in occupied territories, but not brought back to the Reich for fear they will spread tales of hardship. From Vienna Romano also informs me that morale is very bad and that many soldiers have committed suicide rather than return to the Russian front.

JANUARY 12, 1942. The Duce protests against the conduct of the German soldiers in Italy, especially the non-commissioned officers, who are presumptuous, quarrelsome, and drunken. Last night in Foggia two of them forced their way into a house where a man was about to go to bed, and said to him: "We have taken possession of France, Belgium, Holland, and Poland. To-night we are going to take possession of your wife." To which the man replied: "You can take possession of the whole world, but not of my wife. I haven't any. I'm a bachelor." In their disappointment they broke all the furniture before they withdrew. If they go on in this way, even Mussolini, who has protested to Rintelen, foresees some acts of violence.

Generally speaking, nothing new. The Japanese are doing well, the Germans not at all well in Russia, and we, in Libya, so-so.

JANUARY 13, 1942. Politically, these are rather empty days. From the military point of view attention has turned toward the Russian Front, where there are continual difficulties for the Germans. Alfieri, too, who as a rule paints everything in rosy colours, begins to admit openly that they are swallowing a bitter pill. The retreat continues under the growing pressure of the enemy. The Duce does not seem to be very worried, but considers the situation very serious. He blames Hitler for the entire Russian campaign and says that he has falsified his communiqués. "He has used big figures to impress people like that jackass of a Roosevelt," he said, "and the results have been sinister. In fact, they are both big jackasses and belong to kindred races."

Buti is received by Mussolini before his departure for Paris, and listens to these instructions: he is to take no political initiative. He should try to stimulate economic and commercial exchanges; not do very much in the cultural field except to send some of our products, such as books, plays, films to France, and not to take anything from the French.

I have seen von Mackensen. I had not seen him for ten days, as he has been ill. As always happens to the Germans when times are bad, he appeared dejected. I tried to inject some energy into him.

JANUARY 14, 1942. On my way to Budapest. Brief stop at Vienna. The city is sad and tired-looking. Romano confirms that the people are not in a good mood.

JANUARY 15, 1942. Elsewhere I have put down my impressions of and my conversations with the Hungarians, but since my notes were going into many different hands I was very cautious. The truth is that the Hungarians are exasperated with the Germans. You can't remain long with any Magyar before he speaks ill of Germany. All of them are like this, from the Regent to the poorest beggar on the street.

Admiral Horthy said: "The Germans are a courageous people, and I admire them for this, but they are also an unbearable, tactless, and boorish people." Kanya<sup>293</sup> was even more cutting. Betlen weighed his words, but in talking about German interference he was violent, even though restrained.

JANUARY 16, 1942. In Budapest. Military ceremonies, and a free afternoon.

JANUARY 17, 1942. Went shooting at Mesohegeys. It was a good day, but not such a big day as the one in 1938. Ribbentrop had already killed most of the wild game, and the Regent was too tired to go on very long.

JANUARY 18, 1942. With the Italians in Budapest, a patriotic ceremony at Fascist headquarters. In the evening I leave.

JANUARY 19, 1942. On the train for Rome. I stopped in Venice for supper.

JANUARY 20, 1942. I report to Mussolini on my trip. He seems to be interested in what I said in my report and what I say personally to him. He, in turn, gives me the latest news.

France. The Führer does not care to accept the terms which Vichy lays down for placing Tunisian ports at our disposal. He is right. They are excessive. Besides, I never doubted Hitler's intentions in this respect.

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<sup>293</sup> Kalman de Kanya: Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1933-8; resigned. Member of the National Union. Fled to Switzerland, 1944.



Rio de Janeiro. America is insisting that all South American countries break relations with us. If this happens, the Duce believes that it would be to our interest to declare war at once. In this way we shall impose upon the United States the burden of military defence on a vast front. "They want a white war," says Mussolini, "but they will get a red one."

Libya. The situation is precarious. Our supplies are scarce, while the British forces are extremely well supplied. The Duce fears that it will not be possible to hold the present line. He has talked this over with Cavallero, proposing a withdrawal to the Sirte-Homs line. Cavallero has written a memorandum opposing this. Nevertheless, Mussolini has not yet abandoned his project and will come back to it again.

To-day the Duce was in good humour but looked tired.

The King has added to the noble title of Buccari that of Cortellazzo.<sup>294</sup> I am proud of this because of the memory of my father.

JANUARY 21, 1942. Cavallero, on his way to Libya, explores the situation with me. Naturally he persists in his official optimism. He uses propagandist slogans, such as "We will resist", "They shall not pass", and "The difficulties will strengthen our will", which displease me when mouthed by a general. Anyway, he says (1) that the Russian push on the Eastern Front is almost exhausted; (2) that in Libya we shall be able to resist an eventual British attack; (3) that the training of the Italian Army continues at a favourable pace. We shall see to what extent Cavallero is right.

JANUARY 22, 1942. I went to see the King. He talked little. As always, he is anti-German. He criticized the organization of the Italian Army.

I received General Roatta on his farewell visit. He was embittered but dignified. He said he realized that his association with Cavallero could not continue because "Cavallero is a man who loves to create and believe in illusions, while Roatta wishes always to keep his feet on the ground." He maintains that the war is now in its critical phase; even for Libya he isn't at all

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<sup>294</sup> Ciano would now be called Cavaliere Galeazzo Ciano, Conte di Cortellazzo e di Buccari. Both Cortellazzo and Buccari are places where Admiral Ciano had distinguished himself in the 1914-18 war.

confident, and fears that we shall soon feel more British pressure which we shall not be able to resist. He is pleased over his new command in Croatia. In the spring he will get plenty of fighting. Roatta may not be a very pleasant person, but he is the most intelligent general I know.

Osio, founder of the Labour Bank, was kicked out of his job. He came to tell me, and, although he is a strong man, he had tears in his eyes. The reason for his dismissal is not clear, but it appears that Osio made some comment not entirely orthodox, and some say he had a quarrel with Petacci's brother over business matters. In fact, Osio talked about it a little too freely, calling Petacci "Lorenzino de Medici".<sup>295</sup>

To-day Grandi could no longer contain himself and said: "I don't know how I was able to disguise myself as a Fascist for twenty years." Arpinati tells me that Grandi plays the liberal reactionary and royalist in Bologna. He told me that the King frequently invites him to lunch. I asked Acquarone if this were true, and he denied it categorically.

JANUARY 23, 1942. News from Rio de Janeiro is contradictory regarding the decision of Argentina and Chile. I fear that notwithstanding divisions of opinion these countries will also line up against us in the end. Mussolini is almost glad about it. I confess that I am most distressed. Not only because every hope of peace is vanishing, but also because I think with sadness of the collapse of so much good-will created by our industrious immigrants during a hundred and twenty years of work. In certain places undoubtedly the mother country is pretty well forgotten, but in many others they still love Italy with a deep nostalgic attachment. If war comes, many Italian tears will be shed.

News from Russia is bad. The Russian advance continues at an accelerated pace, with growing strength. Alfieri, in one of his reports which betrays the style of Ridomi, describes the internal German situation in dark colours, though he does not come to pessimistic conclusions. It is still too early to say, but, as Grandi said yesterday, a Beresina<sup>296</sup> wind is blowing. In

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<sup>295</sup> Lorenzino de Medici—i.e., a little or pettifogging Lorenzo de Medici.

<sup>296</sup> Beresina, where Napoleon was defeated on his retreat from Moscow in 1812.

contrast to this we are getting along better in Libya, according to the military.

JANUARY 24, 1942. The Duce was quite disturbed by Alfieri's report, which "really is not encouraging." On the other hand, he is happy about the progress of operations in Libya, and about our naval traffic, even though *Victoria*, which was the pearl of our merchant fleet, was sunk to-day.

Mezzasoma<sup>297</sup> wants to leave the Party and hopes to become director of the Nazione of Florence. He is quite right. He cannot get along with Vidussoni. Somebody wrote an anonymous letter in which all the secretaries of the Party are given titles: Turati is called an epileptic and a dope fiend; Farinacci, one who inflicts wounds upon himself in order to escape military duty, and also a thief; and so on down the line to Vidussoni, who is called the perfect champion of Fascist youth, depraved, ignorant, and moronic. Naturally they exaggerate, and a great many unjust rumours about Vidussoni are going the rounds. However, I cannot say that he has yet given any evidence of qualities which would justify his appointment. I believe the Duce himself will soon see that he has to do with a pupil unworthy of his teacher.

Pareschi would like to get grain from Hungary. They will not give it to us, particularly since they fear that the Germans, whom they hate, intend to impoverish them further. Yet in Hungary there is an abundance of everything. The only thing lacking is the desire to make war.

JANUARY 25, 1942. Again Mussolini complains of the behaviour of the Germans in Italy. He has before him the transcript of a telephone call by one of Kesselring's aides, who, when speaking to Berlin, called us "macaroni" and hoped that Italy, too, would become an occupied country. The Duce is keeping a dossier of all this, which "is to be used when the moment comes". In the meantime, he protests strongly against Clodius's request to have still more Italian labourers sent to Germany. They would like to raise the number from two hundred thousand to three hundred and twenty-five thousand. It is too much. Moreover, it is impossible because,

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<sup>297</sup> Fernando Mezzasoma: A Fascist Party secretary.

apart from other considerations, our own labour supply is running short and we shall soon have to call new classes to the colours.

The breaking of diplomatic relations with South American countries begins. To-day it is Peru, to-morrow it seems it will be Uruguay and Brazil. I have seen the Argentine Ambassador, who has just returned from Buenos Aires. His country has held firm and will still hold firm, but will not be able to resist in isolation for an indefinite period. We must, therefore, expect the breaking off of relations with all of South America. He indicated the possibility of discriminating between us and Germany. I unhesitatingly dispelled all his illusions on this point. The Duce would never accept it, nor would it be to our interest.

JANUARY 26, 1942. Hunger grows in Greece. We can give very little, but we have even less means of transport to get it there. The Italian merchant fleet has not a single ship to put at our disposal. We shall have to turn to the Italian Red Cross and ask them to try to get some ships. The Duce has agreed to this solution.

We are getting on well in Libya. The Germans are intensifying their propaganda about it to raise morale at home, which is quite low over the way things are going on the Russian Front, where the Germans are still losing.

JANUARY 27, 1942. Nothing new.

JANUARY 28, 1942. Goering has arrived in Rome but I have not seen him. In the first place, this is because the visit is of a military character and the military have insisted on monopolizing his reception. In the second place, it is because this paunchy individual has for some time—in fact from the time of the granting of the collar to von Ribbentrop—adopted a haughty attitude towards me that I do not like very much. When I was in Berlin the last time, he received me with an almost regal ceremony, to which he did not try to add any personal cordiality. He knows my address is the Palazzo Chigi. If he wants me, he knows where to find me.

The Duce has told me that Goering said, on getting off the train: "We are having hard times." Cavallero later telephoned to inform me that Goering is optimistic about the possibilities of an understanding with France. How much truth is there in it?

I have read Churchill's long address attentively. It is clear that times are hard for them, too, and that many disappointments are in store for the future. But it does not seem that he has faltered in his decision to carry on the struggle to the end.

JANUARY 29, 1942. The Duce talked to Goering for almost three hours yesterday. Schmidt took the conversation down as usual. I shall try to get it, but it is not so easy to get it from them. Goering is bitter about things in Russia and takes it out on the German generals, who have little or no sympathy for the Nazis. He thinks that difficulties will last throughout the winter, but is just as convinced that Russia will be defeated in 1942 and that Great Britain will lay down her arms in 1943. I took all this with a grain of salt. Goering is sceptical about the possibilities of an understanding with France, and is taking every opportunity to boycott the armistice, remaining at heart irreconcilably hostile. Goering has taken all measures for the attack on Malta. In a few days the intensive air bombardments will begin, then it will be decided whether we can or cannot land. The Duce summarizes his impressions as follows: attitude towards us, very good; general morale, pretty good.

Brazil has broken diplomatic relations. Mussolini wanted me to say to the Chargé d'Affaires who made the declaration that he, Mussolini, has the memory of an elephant, and some day he would make them pay dearly for it. But how? And when?

JANUARY 30, 1942. Nothing new.

JANUARY 31, 1942. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 1, 1942. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 2, 1942. Mussolini is very pleased about operations in Libya. He wants us to push them, because, from some intercepted American messages, it appears that the British forces are somewhat disorganized.

For the first time since his presentation visit two years ago I have seen the Chilean Ambassador. He does not believe that his Government will ever go so far as to break diplomatic relations with the Axis. The new President-elect, Rios,<sup>298</sup> notwithstanding the fact that he belongs to the Popular Front, will follow the same line. The Ambassador is doing his best to

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<sup>298</sup> Morales Juan Antonio Rios, member of the Popular Front. President of Chile, 1942-6. Died 1946.

influence him in this respect, especially since he is profoundly convinced of Anglo-American defeat.

Luncheon with Goering at Cavallero's. As usual he is bloated and overbearing. He said nothing that is especially worthy of mention. I only regret the servility of our leading soldiers toward him. Following the example of that perfect clown, Cavallero, who would even go so far as to bow to the public lavatories if this would advance him, the three heads of our military staff acted to-day in the presence of that German as if he were their master. And he strutted blissfully. I know that it is futile, but I swallowed a great deal of bile—more bile than food.

FEBRUARY 3, 1942. The Duce asked me to read two letters which Melchiori sent from Libya. They are typical of this unpleasant figure, two reports against our command and in praise of Rommel. I do not know whether he is right or wrong, but I distrust the individual and everything he does. Nevertheless, there is nothing more humiliating than Melchiori's way of placing himself at the service of the Germans and cheating the Italians. Mussolini, who had taken the letters seriously, inveighed strongly against Gambara and Bastico, especially because Gambara is reported to have said at a dinner—but I do not believe it—"Mussolini has sold Italy to Germany. I hope to live twenty years longer in order to command an army which will then fight the Germans."

I have also received a long report by Gambara on the situation in Libya. It is an interesting document that is worth keeping. Gambara was against Rommel's withdrawal, as he is now against his rapid advance. We shall see if and to what extent he is right.

FEBRUARY 4, 1942. Goering leaves Rome. We had dinner at the Excelsior Hotel, and during dinner Goering talked of little else but the jewels he owned. In fact, he had some beautiful rings on his fingers. He explained that he bought them for a relatively small sum in Holland after all jewels were confiscated in Germany. I am told that he plays with his gems like a little boy with his marbles. During the journey he was nervous, so his aides brought him a small vase filled with diamonds. He placed them on the table and counted them,

lined them up, mixed them together, and calmed down completely. One of his high officers said last evening: "He has two loves—beautiful objects and making war." Both are expensive hobbies. At the station he wore a great sable coat, something between what motorists wore in 1906 and what a high-grade prostitute wears to the opera. If any of us tried a thing like that we would be stoned in the streets. He, on the contrary, is not only accepted in Germany but perhaps even loved for it. That is because he has a dash of humanity.

FEBRUARY 5, 1942. No news of any particular importance. Now that the pendulum swings in our favour and against the British in Libya, the Vichy Government is anxious to smile at us. We must accept this for what it is worth.

On his arrival from Germany I accompanied De Cicco to the Duce. He took a very optimistic line. Hitler is calm, and the people are strong and determined to fight to the end. In substance I think he is right, even though Lanza, who has been in Berlin a few years, paints a darker picture. According to him, hopes for a total victory vanished on the Russian steppes, and the Germans now aim at a negotiated peace.

I have learned that the Prince of Piedmont will be chosen to command an Italian army in Russia. Is this a good thing? Is it wise to send him? I would consider very carefully before answering.

I see Ravasio. He found some pretext to come to see me, but in reality he wanted to discuss the Party and his own present situation. His disagreement with Vidussoni, or rather with his entourage, was inevitable. Ravasio will explode before long because he feels that he is being attacked from above and wants to protest, but Vidussoni has put him in a quiet corner of the Department of Propaganda. Ravasio knows that Vidussoni is a fool, and is convinced that things will go from bad to worse. He accepts no responsibility, not having been at fault. All this makes the situation of the Party more precarious than ever.

FEBRUARY 6, 1942. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 7, 1942. Meeting of the Council of Ministers. Mussolini makes a rather brief statement on the progress of the war in Libya and concludes with his usual attack on our generals. On the other hand, he extols Rommel, who is always

in his tank at the head of the attacking columns. The Bersaglieri are enthusiastic about him and give him their feathers, and carry him in triumph on their shoulders, shouting that with him they are sure they can reach Alexandria. The measures taken to-day are of no particular importance, but Revel announced a new loan in order to reduce circulation of money, declaring that after the end of the war interest on state bonds will be greatly lowered.

Grandi, accompanying me to the Ministry, made his usual attack on the domestic policy of the regime and also took it out on the King, who, he said, has become an imbecile. I had to stop him because, apart from everything else, this is not true.

Complaints from von Mackensen about an article by Admiral Ducci in which it is shown that it would be to the British advantage to make a landing in northern Norway. According to Mackensen his arguments are excellent. But for this very reason could he write anything more idiotic?

FEBRUARY 8, 1942. The German objection has resulted in the suppression of the newspaper *Oggi*. When the Duce mentioned it to me I encouraged him to suppress it. It was the organ of very questionable individuals, who accepted the regime, but with considerable and ill-concealed reservations. These second-rate and discontented intellectuals are headed by Bottai, who boasts that he has accredited an ambassador, whose name he conceals, to the Petaccis.

Admiral de Courten, who commanded a convoy to Tripoli, told me of the struggle he had had against torpedo planes. It is only due to luck that all his division was not lost. De Courten takes a very optimistic view of the development of the war at sea. There is only one dark spot—the lack of oil. Just now we have barely a hundred thousand tons, and only a negligible quantity gets through to us from abroad. This immobilizes the Navy, particularly the large ships, which otherwise would enjoy total supremacy in the Mediterranean.

FEBRUARY 9, 1942. Attolico died suddenly, and this grieves me very much. Not only for personal reasons (since he was bound by strong friendship to poor Maria), but also because I greatly valued his collaboration. Of all the ambassadors who have worked with me through recent years he was



among the most intelligent and certainly the most courageously honest. In Berlin he foresaw the power of the new Reich and favoured the understanding and friendship between the two regimes. He didn't believe in the supposed miracles of blitz warfare, and fought tenaciously, first of all against the outbreak of the conflict; second, against our entry into it. We owe it to him in large measure if in September we did not immediately join the Germans, and thereby incur the consequences which would have followed. With Attolico, we lose a man who in other times would have been called "*un grand commis de l'état*". Bottai wants to succeed him at the Holy See. The Duce was against it. He said: "I refuse to believe that at forty-six years of age the ardent Bottai would want to end his career by becoming a sacristan. Besides, he still has to carry through the educational reform which he invented and which he would now like to side-step. We shall appoint Guariglia, whom I esteem both for his intellect and for his character."

Baldur von Schirach is in Rome. He is convinced we shall have a long war. He is an optimist who doesn't exaggerate. He sees the main cause for alarm in our food situation.

FEBRUARY 10, 1942. I have received El Gailani,<sup>299</sup> the Prime Minister of Iraq, who started the anti-British movement and now works diligently in Rome and Berlin creating goodwill for the future Arab nations. The Germans are prudent and do not wish to sign any pact with him for the present. He is a vivacious and resolute man, who has great influence among his people because of both his rank and his personality. He has faith in the victory of the Axis and says that when our forces arrive at Tiflis the British will not be able to prevent an insurrection of their subject peoples. He is sceptical about the Turkish attitude. Except for some military leaders the Turkish people heartily favour the British and hope they will win. I must add that Bismarck, while speaking with Vitetti this morning, gave him to understand that Germany is preparing to attack Turkey, which he thinks is the only way the Germans

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<sup>299</sup> Rashid Ali El Gailani: Prime Minister of Iraq, 1933. Prime Minister and acting Minister of Interior, 1940-1. Attempted a coup d'état, April, 1941, which was defeated, and he fled to Iran and Turkey. Sentenced to death, in absentia by Iraqi Government. He tried to go to Switzerland in 1945 but was refused admission. Took refuge in Saudi Arabia.

can reach the oil wells. But is this conclusion right? It seems that Bismarck sees things from the dark side. He always has been inclined to do so, and the development of affairs in Russia cannot but have discouraged him. Now he will gradually reveal something more.

News from the Eastern Front is again alarming. The Russians are attacking everywhere, and a new withdrawal of our line is to be expected.

Vidussoni has appeared for the first time at dinner at the German Embassy. He had rigged himself out in a shirt with blue stripes and a red tie and handkerchief. He was not very much at ease.

FEBRUARY 11, 1942. Attolico's funeral gave evidence of the esteem and affection in which he was held.

In the afternoon there was a ceremony for the inauguration of the headquarters of the Association of the Friends of Japan. Much to everybody's surprise, the Duke of Pistoia asked to be heard, as he had prepared a clever little speech. The speech was, I am tempted to say, violent. Anyway, it was in an unexpected and unusual tone for a Royal Highness.

FEBRUARY 12, 1942. The British have torpedoed one of our tankers, *Lucania*,<sup>300</sup> en route from Taranto to Genoa to join the convoy of ships destined for the evacuation of our compatriots from East Africa. The ship was travelling according to plan and under the agreement with Great Britain. They really broke their word, and there is no justification for it. The Duce and the Navy, which were always against the idea, now take advantage of what has happened to drop the whole undertaking. Frankly, I can no longer oppose them. I would have staked my reputation on British good faith, but after what happened yesterday this becomes very difficult.

I handed Mackensen the text of a telegram from the American military attaché at Moscow, addressed to Washington. It complains about failure to deliver arms promised by the United States, and says that if the U.S.S.R. is not aided immediately and properly she will have to consider capitulating. Still, up to the present Soviet attacks have continued at an

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<sup>300</sup> *Lucania* was still listed in Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1944-5, as an Italian motor-ship, afloat.

accelerated pace, and it is now a question of the Germans either holding or abandoning the whole sector of Vitebsk-Smolensk. Alfieri telegraphs that the German position is not serious because it corresponds with modern criteria of elastic defence, but I must confess that his arguments do not convince me.

FEBRUARY 13, 1942. The submarine which torpedoed *Lucania* has been rammed and many of those picked up from the latter have been saved. We must, therefore, eliminate the hypothesis that it was sunk by a drifting mine.

The Duce, as usual, is irritated at the military. In order to send two divisions to Russia in March, we must ask the Germans for anti-tank guns, anti-aircraft batteries, and motor vehicles. Notwithstanding this, Cavallero has presented Mussolini with a list which indicates that we are producing two hundred and eighty anti-tank guns a month. When this figure was questioned, he confessed that it was not correct but represented our theoretical possibilities, and, in pencil, in front of the Duce himself, he corrected the two hundred and eighty to one hundred and sixty. This was a sensational reduction. Like the Jews in the street market in Rome. Mussolini was indignant and explained that the only reason he did not throw Cavallero out was because after so many changes he realizes that all generals are equally deceitful. He said: "Only Squero is sincere. He is a fool, but an honest man."

I received Marshal Kwaternik,<sup>301</sup> who handed me a letter from Pavelic. He wants to meet the Duce. I believe this can be arranged in Rome, but not very soon.

FEBRUARY 14, 1942. Nothing new.

During the evening, at the von Clemms', Ninon Belmonte tells me a story that I still can't believe. Two things are clear: that Revel has lost his head over Ninon, and that Revel hates the banker Armenise. His hatred is unreasonable and inexplicable, but none the less unyielding as Cataline's. Armenise, who was beginning to feel the weight of this persecution, turned to Ninon, to whom he was introduced by Rudolfo Borghese.<sup>302</sup> Ninon took up Armenise's cause. Well, Revel not only swore

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<sup>301</sup> Marshal Kwaternik: Yugoslav Commander of the Ustachi.

<sup>302</sup> Rudolfo Borghese, Prince of Nettuno; Member of Chamber of Deputies; served in Libya and was sent on Military Mission to Budapest.

that he will now do him no harm, but also that within a week he will see him to re-establish cordial relations. "He was blushing and sorry," said Ninon, of this fifty-year-old Minister, "like a child caught in a naughty prank. But now that he promised me, I am certain that he will behave." Here is an episode which illustrates certain negative aspects of present-day Italy more than any number of volumes could do.

FEBRUARY 15, 1942. Mussolini has not yet made up his mind to break off negotiations with Great Britain for the evacuation of Italians from East Africa. He prefers to consider it further. He is opposed in principle to sending our ships, but realizes it would be too serious a responsibility to refuse.

I write to Bárdossy with the idea of acquiring some wheat. Pareschi and Pascolato have come to speak to me of the cereal-production situation. They consider it bad. By March it will be necessary to reduce rations by fifty grammes, but this will not be enough to carry us through.

The Duce is much more optimistic. He believes that we shall have enough wheat, and that in any case his appeal to the people will make them patient and understanding.

FEBRUARY 16, 1942. Kruia has come to Rome for the first time since the installation of his Cabinet at Tirana. When he was appointed there was considerable criticism: among the Italians because he is considered too nationalistic, among the Albanians because he is of humble origin and the Albanian tradition is still feudal. Verlaçi said of him: "I shall never be able to respect a man whose father waited on me in the house of Essad Pasha." It is too early to pass judgment on the Kruia experiment. So far things have gone well, and even the indignation that had been aroused in many Albanian circles has calmed down. It was feared that he would be an extremist, but instead he has shown himself moderate. Now that he is in power, he, too, realizes that "*la critique est aisée, mais l'art est difficile*." He has not asked me for anything unexpected, except some small rectifications on the Montenegro frontier and some changes in the flag. They do not want the eagle imprisoned between the lictors' fasces and the knots of the House of Savoy. The request is a delicate one and not to be too quickly rejected.

Churchill made a speech to-day which I should call firm

but grave. The fall of Singapore has been a great blow to the British Empire. "I should like to know," Mussolini said to-day, "the effect four British officers, presenting themselves with a white flag of surrender, has had upon those whimsical Orientals. If it had been us, no one would have attached any importance to it, but they were British."

FEBRUARY 17, 1942. A conversation between Mussolini and Kruia. The Albanian President talked about the situation, sounding an optimistic note. Mussolini emphasized his desire to grant the Albanians a more and more liberal and autonomous local regime. This is the only policy possible—one that bears good fruit. Otherwise, Albania, too, would be a breeding place for revolt and intrigue like the other occupied countries. Revel, as might be expected, told me that he received Armenise and put an end to the cruel rivalry with a long embrace. Oh, women, women!

FEBRUARY 18, 1942. With Gailani to see Mussolini. Gailani was insistent on having a treaty immediately and a declaration of independence for the Arab states. The Duce kept him guessing, because for some time the Germans have indicated their opposition to gestures of this sort. Mussolini said that he will make this declaration when it can take immediate effect, that is, when our military forces are close enough to the Arab countries for the words to be immediately followed by deeds. What once appeared fantastic now seems possible. The Japanese victories are shattering British resistance hour by hour, and may perhaps prepare a more rapid and successful conclusion than we could have foreseen. In fact, the Anglo-Saxon situation has never appeared to me so desperate as it does now. But I believe they will hold on. Yesterday I announced at a luncheon for Kruia and in the presence of all the Ministers a formula which was well received. We are not born young; we become young.

FEBRUARY 19, 1942. An address by Senator Kruia in the City Hall of Rome. He spoke of the Italo-Albanian union, but it was more a theoretical and academic than a political speech. The Party should have organized things better. The hall was half empty.

Muti told me that Farnesi, Vidussoni's chief of cabinet,

frankly declared to him that his boss is "an imbecile", and he is very worried when Vidussoni has to do anything without the help of his colleagues.

FEBRUARY 20, 1942. Alfieri sends a strange telegram, according to which Ribbentrop prophesies that Great Britain will ask for an armistice in order to save what can still be saved. Can it be that the Germans are actually beginning to realize the fearful tragedy which this war represents for the white race? It would be a good thing, but I can't believe it.

This morning Mussolini showed some concern about coal and steel. We are short of these things, and the Germans only partially carry out their commitments to us. "Among the cemeteries," says Mussolini, "I shall some day build the most important of all, one in which to bury German promises. They have delivered nothing, or almost nothing, of what they promised. So I have persuaded Cavallero not to ask for the anti-tank guns and the anti-aircraft guns for our divisions going to Russia. I prefer to take the risk of taking twelve batteries from the Rome defences." Naturally, he took it out on the Italian bourgeoisie, "which never troubled itself to develop the resources of the country", and which "he is sorry not to have physically exterminated in 1911".

Horthy's son was appointed Vice-Regent of Hungary. Anfuso telegraphs that the enthusiasm of the Assemblies was moderate. The man is not up to the job. He is a gentleman, modest and courteous, but nothing more. Through this gesture Hungary tries to take out some kind of anti-German insurance policy. I don't know if they have guessed right. In Berlin there is much coolness, and I am told they will not send congratulations to the Vice-Regent.

FEBRUARY 21, 1942. No news.

FEBRUARY 22, 1942. From Prague our Consul-General reports that the deputy Reich Protector is treating our nationals, if not worse than the Czechoslovaks, certainly not much better. I showed the report to Mussolini, who is indignant and wants Alfieri to protest, with some moderation, to von Ribbentrop. "And after this the Germans have the effrontery to protest against Japanese chauvinism. I much prefer the yellow people, even if the Japanese were to spread as far as the Persian Gulf."

The coal situation is very bad. This month will be exceptionally good if we reach five hundred and forty thousand tons, that is, one third of our needs. If we go on in this way, by April we shall have consumed all the available supplies for the railways.

Rome is full of rumours about the Duce's violent anti-Vatican statements. In fact, he has said some things, but more theoretical than political, more historical than contemporary—such as he has often said before. Vidussoni, who is a perfect imbecile, has interpreted them literally, and repeated them in various quarters. He even told d'Aieta that an attack on the Vatican was being prepared. Hence the scandal. This is the result of letting children play with matters of importance.

FEBRUARY 23, 1942. I hadn't seen the King for some time. I found him in bad health, hardly able to stand up.

He said nothing of any particular importance, but reaffirmed his old thesis that the fall of Russia will put Great Britain and America out of the war. I again indicated my doubts.

The Duce is worried about the rumours which are circulating regarding his statements on ecclesiastical matters, and has asked me to see that Guariglia denies them. Evidently Vidussoni, who has few ideas, and very confused ones at that, has a bee in his bonnet about the Vatican. When Guariglia presented himself to Vidussoni a few days ago at the City Hall, as soon as he heard him say, "Ambassador to the Holy See," he ostentatiously turned his back on him. He had confused him with the Nuncio.

I accompanied Clodius to the Palazzo Venezia. He offered some explanations on the non-delivery of coal. He said the winter was exceptionally cold, there was a shortage of labour and railway transport; the Russian front alone needed five thousand more locomotives than had been foreseen. But in the future things will go better. This, at any rate, he was good enough to promise us in the name of the Führer.

FEBRUARY 24, 1942. Mussolini expounds one of his new theories on war. Wars are necessary in order to see and appraise the true internal composition of a people, because during a war the various classes are revealed: the heroes, the profiteers, the indolent. I objected that in any case war is a selection in reverse, because the best die.

A speech by Roosevelt. A calm, measured, but none the less determined speech. It doesn't sound like the speech of a man who is thinking of suing for peace soon. Still, this strange belief is spreading. Even in Italy a good many honest people believe it.

The Papal Nuncio wants to know if it is true that Padua University is preparing to offer Goebbels and Rosenberg honorary degrees. Honouring the two most bitter opponents of Catholicism, in the city of Saint Anthony, would be extremely obnoxious to the Church. However, the rumour had no foundation.

Bismarck talked to d'Aieta in a very pessimistic tone. In Germany they all believe that another winter of war would be unbearable. Everybody, from the supreme heads of the Army and the men close to Hitler, is convinced of this. But no one dares tell Hitler. They ought, therefore, to find some way of coming to an understanding with the Anglo-Saxons, especially as the Nipponese advance is a disaster for the white race. The Germans can do nothing along this line. They are too much hated. They are "black sheep". Thus the Italians should assume the role of world peace-makers. According to Bismarck there isn't one intelligent German who doesn't believe this.

FEBRUARY 25, 1942. There are some signs of friction between the Germans and Japanese. For example, the latter frowned on some proposals made by von Ribbentrop, who, as usual, arrogates to himself the role of Grand Master of the Tripartite Alliance.

Mussolini, who is pro-Japanese, mainly because he is anti-German, expresses his satisfaction. "The Japanese are not a people," he said, "with whom the Germans can take liberties such as calling the Emperor or the Prime Minister out of bed at two o'clock in the morning in order to announce to them decisions that have already been made and carried out."

A strange attempt at murder in Ankara: von Papen was knocked down but is unhurt. We shall see what De Peppo thinks of it. But from here, offhand, I should not be surprised to learn that the Germans have a hand in it and that they are beginning to pave the way for a rupture with Turkey. On the timeliness of this I do not conceal my many doubts.



FEBRUARY 26, 1942. Every time the Germans issue a communiqué that everything is going well on the Eastern Front, they seem fated to get a thrashing. To-day it was Wiasma, which has fallen, and, judging from the Russian and British radio, the Russian thrust is continuing rapidly.

The Duce has issued a decree for the mobilization of civilians. For the time being it will include men between eighteen and fifty-five; later it will be the women's turn. However, there is a certain uneasiness because people do not understand what it is all about. In fact, they are afraid that it will be an imitation of the forced-labour decree imposed upon the Germans. Lombrassa will be in charge of the service as under-secretary. His name is a guarantee of moderation and competence

Oriani's<sup>303</sup> son has become the mouthpiece of dissatisfaction existing in many Fascist circles over the line taken by the regime, especially in its domestic policy. "Let us turn back to the beginning," is the motto of the old members of the Party. The beginning was anti-Bolshevik, traditionalistic, in defence of the family, of private property, and marked by respect for the Church. Now, on the other hand, we are slipping more and more to the left, and I fear that this Vidussoni, who does not understand anything, will attempt to drive the Party too recklessly. Vito Mussolini, who had a conversation with him yesterday, and who is a prudent young man, told me that he was surprised by the idiocy, the ignorance, and the malice of the secretary of the Party.

FEBRUARY 27, 1942. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 28, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 1, 1942. The British accede to our demands after the torpedoing of *Lucania*. They again give the most ample guarantees, and to replace *Lucania* they will release one of our confiscated oil tankers. Our Navy, which would like to boycott the enterprise at all costs, raises objections. It wants the tanker to be an English tanker. Unless this is done they say we shall have one tanker less when peace comes. Mussolini, although he is not enthusiastic about repatriation of the Italians, has protested against this foolish objection. "Either we shall win

<sup>303</sup> Alfredo Oriani: Philosopher, journalist and friend of Mussolini. His father, also named Alfredo, was called "the intellectual forerunner of Fascism".

the war," he commented, "and we shall have tankers to throw away, or we shall lose it and they will not even leave us eyes to weep with."

Notwithstanding the report by Alfieri that the situation on the Eastern Front is now stabilized, we receive news of continual thrusts by the Russians, which at some points penetrate quite deeply. Even Mussolini is now worried. "It's all very well that the Germans have said that we had three hundred divisions. But even admitting this, what is the human material making up these divisions? What is their real morale? Everything depends on the answers to these questions." Very bad news about the state of health of the Duke of Aosta. He has tuberculosis, and hence his end is certain. Mussolini is not interested, and even the Royal House does not seem to be greatly moved by it.

MARCH 2, 1942. Jacomoni reports on the situation in Albania. In general it is good, all things considered. But there is one matter that has attracted my attention: the insufficiency of our military forces. We have scarcely four divisions, each composed of two regiments and the regiments composed of two battalions; a small number of carabinieri, not one tank. These are the forces that are garrisoning Albania. Now it is clear that if a blow were struck from the outside, and if enemy propaganda succeeded within the country, we could not possibly hold on. We must not forget that all the Balkans are in flames, that Albania has only been under Italian rule for three years, that we are at war with America and Great Britain, who have great resources, and with Russia, a master of guile. I shall speak very seriously of all this to the Duce. Obviously before undertaking to send new forces to Russia we must assure ourselves of holding such territory as we have already won.

Pareschi considers the present food situation better and he makes these prophecies: the coming crop will be good because the fields are still well fertilized from the days of the Battle of Wheat; bad crops in the future because of lack of fertilizer.

New and strong Russian attacks on all sectors of the Front. The German communiqué is subdued in tone, and our divisions, too, are having difficulties.

MARCH 3, 1942. The Duke of Aosta is dead. With him

disappears the noble figure of a prince and an Italian, simple in his ways, broad in outlook, humane in spirit. He did not want this war. He was convinced that the Empire could only hold out for a few months, and, besides, he hated the Germans. In this conflict, which drenches the world with blood, he feared a German more than a British victory. When he left for Ethiopia in May, 1940, he had a premonition of his fate. He was determined to face it, but was filled with sadness. I communicated the news to the Duce, who expressed his regret laconically.

In the afternoon Bismarck telephoned to say that his Government was preparing to launch a campaign against the British Secret Service because of the death of the Duke. He added that he personally thought that the plan was in "bad taste". He is right. There is nothing to support this accusation; on the contrary, it's quite absurd. I brought this to the attention of the Duce, who pronounced himself opposed to the plan. Its only value is its indication of the intelligence and morals of those who advanced it. Mussolini is more and more pro-Japanese the less the Germans appear to be so. He would like to write an article praising the Japanese people, who, after centuries of misery and with their faces turned to the future, have in a few months reversed their situation. The Duce considers that the war in the Orient and in the Pacific is ending.

MARCH 4, 1942. I took Jacomoni to the Duce, so that he might speak clearly to him. The internal situation is fundamentally good, but outside the frontiers are a thousand dangers which can quickly change the attitude of the population. The indispensable condition for tranquillity is power—to have power. Now we lack it. Probably more because of his office than from conviction, the Duce said that he does not share our apprehensions. In any case, he will send a third regiment and some companies of light tanks, which are quite useful in towns. Jacomoni, who hadn't seen the Duce for many months, found him heavier and with signs of exhaustion in his face. As a matter of fact it seemed to me that the Duce was less sombre than usual to-day.

Buffarini is very much concerned about the food situation. From every district in Italy come signs of alarm and cries of

grief, and he believes that the situation is rapidly getting worse. To the scarcity of food must be added the steady rise in prices, which makes life really unbearable for all classes of people who live on fixed incomes.

The death of the Duke of Aosta made a great impression on the country. There was sincere sorrow shared by all. A young boy, whose brother is a prisoner, said to me: "To-day my mother cried. All the mothers of prisoners are weeping to-day."

MARCH 5, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 6, 1942. A friend of one of Gambara's secretaries says that when he, Gambara, was replaced in his Libyan command, his aides in Rome were arrested and his office searched by General Maravigna and by the carabinieri. This was a blow delivered by Cavallero, who hates Gambara. I telephoned Cavallero to learn about this, but, as is his custom, he was evasive, saying that he knew nothing about it and that it was the Ministry of War which had acted without his knowledge. He ends by admitting that they are on the trail of illicit business activity by Gambara's aides, but Gambara has nothing to do with it, so he must go to Bolzano to command an army corps. He must not stay in Rome. He must not confer with anyone. We shall see where it will end, but there is no doubt that Cavallero has sought help from the Germans to strike this valorous general who was careless enough to talk too much. It appears that at an officers' mess in Libya he said: "I hope to live long enough to command an Italian Army marching on Berlin."

Vidussoni pays me a long visit to bring me up to date on his plans for the Party. I maintain a careful reserve; it can't last long.

A heavy British bombardment of industrial Paris and, consequently, an attempt by the Germans to arouse French resentment. But Buti informs us that the French are not aroused, or are aroused in a different way.

MARCH 7, 1942. The Duce, who is dissatisfied with the way things are going, said: "This war is not for the Italian people. The Italian people are not mature or consistent enough for so grave and decisive a test. This war is for the Germans and the Japanese, not for us."

Luigi Cortese, Consul-General in Geneva, informs us that fear of invasion is over in Switzerland because no one believes in a complete German victory any longer. In fact, forecasts are of an entirely different nature. It is believed that, having once more banged her head against Russia without definite success, in the coming offensive Germany will have to give up before winter. Feeling towards Italy has improved very much. In fact, it is quite favourable for certain future plans which are hopefully fostered in Switzerland.

Mussolini received Revel's report on the investigation of Graziani. It appears to be very hard on Graziani. The Duce will give me a copy of it. Mussolini does not know whether to have him court-martialled or merely ask him to retire. I would be in favour of the latter solution in time of war. The Duce accuses Graziani of having been responsible for three serious things: a blow to Italian military prestige, the coming of the Germans into Italy, and the loss of the Empire. The Duce now feels that we must attack Tobruk, or another blow will be dealt us by the British.

The Japanese admirals have informed us that they intend to proceed towards India. The Axis must move towards them in the Persian Gulf.

MARCH 8, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 10, 1942. Casero has me read a report from our air intelligence office. It is deeply pessimistic. According to it Germany must bring its war with Russia to an end within a few months, for it is certain that the population will not stand for another winter of war. How much truth is there in this?

Meanwhile, there has been a strange development. Prince Urach,<sup>304</sup> of von Ribbentrop's press bureau, has come to Rome and asked to see d'Aieta. His conversation about Japan was strange, with an ambiguous tinge and bitter-sweet flavour. It is all very well for the Japanese to win, because they are our allies, but after all they belong to the yellow race and their successes are gained at the expense of the white race. It is a theme which frequently appears in German conversation. D'Aieta even had the impression that in a roundabout way

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<sup>304</sup> Prince Alberto von Urach: Nazi press official.

Urach was trying to sound out our feelings about a separate peace between the Axis and Great Britain. Urach also said that the liquidation of Russia still appears to be a very hard task. D'Aieta confined himself to generalities and did well.

I telephoned Bova-Scoppa<sup>305</sup> to postpone my visit to Rumania until later. I see from the telegrams intercepted from the Rumanians that they would like to attribute an anti-Magyar character to my visit. Hence there is nothing to be done.

MARCH 11, 1942. The Duce was indignant about Urach's declarations. He affirmed, on the contrary, his extreme pro-Japanese attitude. "After all, what does the enrichment of the Japanese at the cost of the European standard of life matter? Such materialistic reflections betray the traces of Marxism in the German soul, even though it is now National Socialist."

This morning, at the Sudario, there was a requiem mass for the Duke of Aosta. Only the members of the Court were invited, and, of course, the wearers of the Annunziata. The royal family was seated in a pew which was hidden from our view. The ceremony had just begun when the door opened and a woman in mourning entered, bent and aged. She was Donna Rachele. She took the first seat she could find, and wept throughout the whole ceremony. At the close of the service I called for her car, but it wasn't there. I offered her mine, but she refused. She came on foot and she left on foot. I told the Duce, who was very much surprised. He didn't know that his wife would go to such an intimate royal ceremony. "This is the first time such a thing has happened," he said. But that old woman who was weeping in the Church of the Sudario to-day was not the wife of a great leader. She was simply the mother of a lieutenant of twenty killed in his aeroplane.

MARCH 12 and 13, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 14, 1942. Council of Ministers. There are no important measures except the regulation of registered bonds. This subject causes the Duce to make some extremist economic-financial declarations which end in a dark threat "to dig up another regulation, which has been ready for eight years, which, in just two clauses, changes the entire property situation in

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<sup>305</sup> Bova-Scoppa: Italian representative at Geneva. Later Minister to Rumania.

Italy, in case there is any attempt to oppose this measure".

Further restrictive measures are adopted, due to the state of war, and in particular it is planned to limit the travel of private persons as much as possible. To go from one place to another will require a permit from the prefect with a written justification for the journey.

MARCH 15, 1942. In a conference with Indelli the Japanese have defined their plans. No attack on India, which would disperse their forces in a field that is too vast and unknown; no attack upon Russia; an extension of the conflict towards Australia, where it is evident that the Americans and the British are preparing a counter-attack.

Before his departure I saw Ando,<sup>806</sup> the Japanese Counsellor, who is returning to Tokyo. I gave him a very friendly message for his Government, especially as the Nipponese are sensitive and suspicious about the German attitude. Here, too, the pro-Japanese note is stressed by some just to spite Germany. I do not approve of this. No one can accuse me of being strongly pro-German, but I still prefer the white to the yellow race . . . and then Japan is far away and Germany is close, very close. . . .

Bastianini paints an ultra-pessimistic picture of the Croatian-Dalmatian situation. Except for the militia our armed forces are deplorable. They show no energy and no spirit. Anti-Fascism is widespread among them. Bastianini foresees many dark hours in the spring and summer. He is always rather pessimistic. . . .

MARCH 16, 1942. New and violent Russian attacks make the situation on the Eastern Front, from Kharkov south, rather uncertain. Mussolini does not hide his concern.

The Swedish Minister makes a report on Greece on behalf of his Government. The English are disposed to lift their blockade and to give the Greeks fifteen thousand tons of wheat per month. They naturally ask for some guarantees. I do not know whether the Duce and the Germans are disposed to accept the terms proposed. I shall work for their acceptance because only thus can some millions of innocent and unfortunate human beings escape certain death.

A long conversation with Pareschi on the food situation. It

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<sup>806</sup> Yoshitaka Ando: Counsellor at Japanese Embassy in Rome.

is not good. The recent twenty-five per cent cut in the bread ration was greeted with despair, even though there have not been many signs of protest. Pareschi, who has all the enthusiasm of a convert, looks to the future hopefully and believes that some measures he is going to take will at least accomplish a great deal to better the situation, if not change it completely. Nevertheless, all the most favourable hypotheses are based on good luck and depend on a number of ifs and buts. The facts are that fertilizers are reduced to one third, manual labour is lacking, agricultural implements are wearing out, and fuel is short.

MARCH 17, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 18, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 19, 1942. Pavolini, on his return from a conversation with Goebbels, paints a pretty dark picture of the situation in Germany. Even his German colleague, who in the past has maintained a haughty tone, has had to keep quiet this time. He spoke of a crisis in the regime and about "walking on the razor's edge", and even when he went on to consider the future beyond this dark period he could be only cautiously optimistic. They are no longer talking about destroying Bolshevism; they will be content if they get to the Caucasus.

The words "resistance" and "tenacity" have replaced assertions about "overwhelming victories", "dictated peace", and "New Orders". Pavolini also told a funny and significant story, significant for the Nazis as well as for their menials. When Goebbels sent Farinacci a bust of Hitler the bust was brought by Gauleiter Esser, who prides himself on his Italian. In handing over the gift, this is what he said: "Your Excellency Farinacci, Goebbels has entrusted me to bring you this *busta*," meaning an envelope, instead of *busto*, a bust. To the Italians this meant that Hitler was an envelope, having no original ideas but only those put into his head by others. The story is making the rounds in Germany, and the first to tell it and laugh is Goebbels himself. Farinacci would laugh less.

This morning Mussolini discussed the Italian internal situation, and had to admit that the Italian people do not feel strongly about the war. He explains it by saying that immediate incentives, such as can be easily understood by the common people, are lacking. He believes, therefore, that our line of



propaganda should simply be to flaunt the banner of defeat as a threat. No generosity would be shown by our enemies, and we should be reduced to slavery for a century. But the people aren't even convinced of this. In Milan they are saying: "To end the war let's even win it."

MARCH 20, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 21, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 22, 1942. A few days ago a young man called me by telephone, mentioning the name of the secretary of the Party, and asking to see me as he had some "important disclosures to make about a plot". I received him. He is a boy from Trieste, Armando Stefani, twenty years old, enrolled in the Gruppo Universitario Fascisti, lean, intelligent, sensitive. He said that he had been approached by a journalist, Felice Chilanti, who suggested that he should join a super-Fascist insurrectional movement, the purpose of which would be to eliminate all rightist or conservative elements in the Party, and to impose upon the Duce a violent socialistic policy. Everything was thought out—attacks, seizure of the Ministries, death of Ciano. The young man was very much worried about it, and so he had hastened to tell me. I wouldn't attach much importance to it but for the fact that the police believed there might be something to it. We must get to the bottom of this affair, and with a spell in concentration camp, or even gaol, the hot-headedness of these young men will be cooled off. But this gives rise to a question: Why does all this happen? Might not these be serious anti-Fascist beginnings, which dare not display the flag of revolution openly, but try to hide under the emblems of the Party itself? Are not these elements which the Party itself is lovingly nursing within its ranks, and which, in the opinion of some, are being kept under control by flattery and adulation, and even being encouraged to follow a path which ought instead to be deplored and condemned?

MARCH 23, 1942. Nothing new.

MARCH 24, 1942. I brought the Duce a report on Germany by Lucioli. Even Mussolini said that he "had not read anything so significant and far-reaching for a long time". He is right. After mentioning the miserable internal situation of the country, Lucioli explains how there could be no political

support for the military side of the war. They talked a lot about a New Order, but did nothing to bring it about. The whole of Europe to-day languishes under German occupation. The enemies of Germany have multiplied infinitely, even though they can do no more at the moment than hate and hold their peace.

Lucioli says that in Germany they are now thinking of a possible defeat. For this reason they want all the countries of the continent exhausted, so that even in case of defeat the Germans will be relatively strong. The Duce was struck by this idea, and said that by the end of 1943 he intends to have fifteen perfect divisions ready in the valley of the Po. Very good. I replied that this is now a war of attrition, the progress of which is not easy to predict. Anything is possible. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare our forces, and to keep them *at home*. Some day, maybe not too far away, a small but solid army at one's disposal might decide the fate of Europe.

Cavallero came to see me, and I had a slight argument with him on the Gambara question. The argument ended in an embrace; but is he sincere?

MARCH 25, 1942. Some interesting telegrams from Turkey. De Peppo has spoken to various personalities, and although there is some difference of opinion on the military situation, they are in agreement in believing that the German-Russian conflict will end by forcing Turkey to face the very alternative she would like to avoid. But De Peppo is not in a position to give the answer to the question whether she will decide for us or against us. However, it appears from numerous sources that the ties between Turkey and the Anglo-Saxons are growing stronger and stronger.

MARCH 26, 1942. Colonel Amè speaks with great concern of the German situation. He bases his conviction not only upon the information that had come to him from our military intelligence service stationed in Germany, but also upon what he personally has been told by his German colleague, Admiral Canaris: the internal situation is serious both from the material and moral viewpoint. The Army is bitter and in disagreement with the politicians. There is little confidence

in the spring offensive, certainly a feeling that no final success can be attained. The German people are tired of "victories" and no longer believe in "victory".

Commenting on the steps taken by Hitler to detach the S.S. from the regular army, in order to make a single large unit of it, the Duce sees the symptoms of a deep and perhaps incurable uneasiness.

An address by Churchill to the Conservatives. As usual he was quick to recognize the disasters that have occurred, but he reaffirmed his determination to carry on to the end, and his certainty of ultimate victory. We must honestly recognize in Churchill an orator of singular power, capable of moving people deeply.

MARCH 27, 1942. A long conversation with Squero on the Gambara affair. In spite of Cavallero's thousand insinuations Gambara is a perfect gentleman with a clear record. He came out of the investigation as clean as a whistle. Everything was exaggerated by Cavallero for the purpose of wreaking vengeance on an over-courageous critic, and to eliminate an audacious young general who might have overshadowed him. In any case, Squero will act in defence of Gambara.

Squero is certainly a fine person. He may not be a genius, but he is sincere and honest. Mussolini also trusts him completely, and he does well to do so.

MARCH 28, 1942. Distribution of gold medals awarded posthumously to fallen aviators. Balbo's son, who without looking like him yet reminds one of his father, received his father's decoration without batting an eyelid, pale and proud. Then came Bruno's widow. She carried little Marina, who held out her arms to her grandfather. There was sincere emotion in the air. Mussolini's expression was stone-like and did not change. He decorated Bruno's wife, the wife of his Bruno, as though she were just another of those who have been bereaved. Somebody asked whether the Duce was superhuman or inhuman. He is neither one nor the other. He was simply conscious of the fact that at that moment any weakness would have had an echo in a thousand hearts. Later, for only a moment, when Marina was going away, I saw a light in his eyes—a light that fully betrayed everything that his iron will

had sought to hide. I felt myself very close to his heart and to his sorrow.

In Venice we have had the first demonstrations caused by the bread shortage. Many people who had used all their ration stamps before they became due are protesting because the bakers refuse to sell. The Duce was resentful and sad; he gave orders to scatter the people by the police beating them with their leather scabbards. But this is an ugly occurrence, which proves that many calculations in the matter of food were wrong, and the coming weeks may hold some nasty surprises in store.

MARCH 29, 1942. To-day there have been bread riots at Matera, where groups of women broke into the Fascist Party headquarters and were dispersed by the carabinieri, who were forced to fire in the air. These are serious symptoms, especially as the harvest is far away and the available food supply scarcer and scarcer. Buffarini is expecting similar riots throughout the country and has sent his prefects a telegram of instruction which begins with the words "Keep calm". He wants to avoid bloodshed, and he is right.

Gastaldi, the former Federal Secretary of Turin, whom I hardly know, comes to me with the story of his dissensions with a partner, and up to this point it is harmless. But, as usual, the Petacci family is mixed up in the affair, which he speaks about freely. It meddles and grants political protection, threatens from above, intrigues from below, and steals at all points of the compass. The chief of the carabinieri, Cerrica, had told me about this confidentially a few minutes before. Without doubt this scandal will spread and involve the Duce. But what can one do to warn him, especially as two of his most intimate colleagues, De Cesare and Buffarini, are making plenty of money in this underworld setting? Nevertheless, as far as I am concerned, I want to keep out of this, and out of respect for the Duce I brusquely cut short anyone who speaks to me about it.

At a meeting of the directors of the Party yesterday Mussolini was violently critical of the younger and apologetic for the older members of the Party. Is he beginning to realize the deep and widespread crisis within the Party?

MARCH 30, 1942. Agostini attacked Cavallero violently.

According to him, Cavallero has already chosen the new commander of the carabinieri, which he would like to control for ulterior purposes. There is a great deal of exaggeration, but a substratum of truth, in Agostini's words.

Vidussoni goes to Venice to discuss with Axmann the foundation of a European Youth Association, which would be under the honorary presidency of Schirach. Vidussoni would like to ask for an Italian presidency side by side with the German. I am certain that Schirach will not be favourably disposed, since he feels strongly about the whole idea. I do not conceal my doubts on the matter from Vidussoni, but the young man, who is as ignorant as he is presumptuous, insisted on his point of view. Let him break his neck if he wants to.

MARCH 31, 1942. Nothing new.

APRIL 1, 1942. The Duce has learned from an industrialist of the Alto Adige that the following joke is circulating in Germany: "In two months we shall win the war against Russia, in four months against Great Britain, and in four days against Italy." He has asked me to obtain confirmation from Alfieri while "on his part he is beginning to train new divisions, because it is not known what surprises are in store for 1943". Mussolini is also very much concerned by a report from Anfuso regarding the behaviour in Budapest of two groups of Italians who have gone to Hungary for the agricultural exhibition. Drunken brawls in night clubs and raids on food shops. This report gave rise to a violent Mussolinian tirade against the middle class.

Pareschi is rather optimistic about our present harvest. On the other hand, he makes increasingly dark prophecies for the future.

APRIL 2, 1942. The Prefect of Naples, Albini, reports that the Neapolitan situation is bad, but the Neapolitans are people who are accustomed to tightening their belts and suffering; hence, there is nothing to be feared, at least until some new and serious incident develops.

Hason, chief of the carabinieri, reports that the general situation is better, but the country has lost faith in the Party, which is no longer an important element in the national life. The Army still maintains its unchanged hostility toward Cavallero,

although it recognizes that there is no general who enjoys a real and indisputable prestige and who, therefore, deserves to replace him. The appointment of Gariboldi as commander of the troops in Russia has created a good impression. It was known that he was a personal enemy of Cavallero and his appointment was not expected.

Farnesi<sup>307</sup> expressed concern about the food situation and criticism of the attitude of young men to-day. The centres of infection are the classes on political leadership in the universities, where one finds some ambitious, crooked, and untrustworthy individuals. From now on they will be scattered at various jobs in distant cities, and the press of the universities will be placed under the supervision of serious and responsible persons.

Borri, Prefect of Genoa, reports that the city is in good shape, but lack of food supplies is beginning to be worrying.

Geloso, commander of the troops in Greece, reports that the people are law-abiding, public health is in danger, the food outlook is a little better for the future.

APRIL 3, 1942. Nothing new.

APRIL 4, 1942. A move by the Japanese Ambassador to get us to intervene with the Holy See. At the time the Vatican established diplomatic relations with Japan it did the same with Chiang Kai-shek. The Japanese prefer that the Chinese Minister should not come at all or that his arrival be postponed for some time at least. I do not know how much we can really do, but I have promised the Ambassador to act on his request.

APRIL 5, 1942. Mussolini does not want to take the thirteen thousand tons of wheat which Pareschi got Hungary to promise him. He considers this a pittance and believes that we can produce enough food without a further reduction in the ration.

Del Drago<sup>308</sup> returns from Paris. Berlin hasn't changed on the surface, while, on the other hand, Paris is really in a sad state. In some German circles he was told that after the offensive on the Eastern Front, which will practically annihilate

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<sup>307</sup> Mario Farnesi: Provincial Secretary of the Fascist Party. Chief of Cabinet under Vidussoni.

<sup>308</sup> Prince Del Drago: Attaché of the Italian Embassy in Paris.

Russia, they are hoping to obtain a compromise peace with the Anglo-Saxon countries.

To-day I went to mass at Santa Maria degli Angeli. The church was filled by a devout crowd. I do not at all believe, as some would like to have it, that Italy is not a fundamentally Catholic country.

APRIL 6, 1942. When Goering was in Rome we spoke of the possibility of arranging for certain Italian paintings now in France to be returned to Italy, particularly those which belonged to Jews and were seized by the Germans. Among the names that were mentioned in the conversation was that of Rothschild, who owned many Boldinis. To-day Goering sent me a Boldini as a gift, and his letter began: "Unfortunately, there was nothing left in the Rothschild house . . ." If, some day, this letter is found, it will appear that it was I who suggested he should sack the homes of Jews and that he was sorry that he had arrived too late. This is an example of the political sharpness of the Germans.

The Vichy Government is attempting blackmail in the typical French manner regarding the repatriation of the Italians in East Africa. Whereas it had previously sanctioned the embarkation of our nationals at Jibuti, it now raises many objections unless we repatriate at the same time one hundred and fifty French civilians and six hundred and fifty soldiers. While it is possible to agree about the civilians, it is not possible for the military. Meanwhile, I believe that it would be worth while to turn them down hard. We shall see about it later.

We have received news of a Japanese air attack on Colombo. Does this represent a first move towards India? I believe, rather, that its object is to impress the Indians during the Cripps<sup>309</sup> negotiations, which just now seem to be moving in the general direction of a partially favourable conclusion.

APRIL 7, 1942. Nothing new.

APRIL 8, 1942. Somebody was talking about illiteracy in certain Italian regions, when Mussolini said: "Even if there is illiteracy, what does it matter? In the fourteenth century Italy was populated by nothing but illiterates, but this did not pre-

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<sup>309</sup> Sir Stafford Cripps was on a mission to India to negotiate an agreement on eventual Indian independence.

vent the flowering of Dante Alighieri. To-day, when everybody knows how to read and write, we have instead the poet Govoni, who, while not exactly insignificant, is certainly less than Dante."

The Prefect of Rome informs me that the Duce is indignant because he sees too many young men walking in the streets of the capital. He has given orders that they must be conscripted into the Army. But what will be done with them? How will they distinguish between the unemployed and those who are forced to walk in the streets because of their occupations? I recall that in Peking, when old Chiang Tso-lin was in need of soldiers, he would block off a few streets and his soldiers would then seize all male citizens who were passing by, shave their heads and immediately put them into uniform. No protest was of avail. The problem of conscription was reduced to a problem of street traffic. Are they thinking of adopting in Rome the ways of this old Pekinese despot?

I see Gambara, who is indignant but not saddened by Cavallero's hostility. It seems that they are going to send him to Russia. If this happens, I am sure that his name will once again become a synonym for success.

APRIL 9, 1942. Alfieri has come to Rome on leave. He does not report anything particularly important, but is less optimistic than usual and thinks that the summer offensive can have only a limited success.

On the other hand, the statements made by Bismarck to Blasco d'Aieta in the greatest confidence are more interesting. I summarize them briefly. By October, no matter how things go, Germany must make peace. The Army cannot and will not attack then, in the first place because it is not according to its tradition, and also because it has had its back broken by the removal of its best military leaders. There are many disturbances within the Party. Himmler himself, who was an extremist in the past, but who now feels the real pulse of the country, wants a compromise peace. By October Great Britain will be ripe for negotiations, especially if the Germans would consider the possibility of an anti-Japanese collaboration for the reconquest of Asia by the whites. Italy should assume the initiative within the Axis to bring the war on to a diplomatic plane. Are these the imaginings of our Bismarck, or are they



manifestations of real trends in German public opinion? I lack the information for an opinion, but it is noteworthy that Otto spoke after Admiral Canaris' visit to Rome and the many conversations he has had with him. Personally, I believe that German capacity for resistance is far greater.

APRIL 10, 1942. Conversation between the Duce and Alfieri. Mussolini was less interested in information than in reaffirming his complete optimism about the progress of the war and its conclusion. He gave as much evidence of anti-German sentiment as of pro-Japanese feelings. He was in a happy mood, and talkative. Speaking of Charlemagne, he said that he admired his virility above all, since he agrees with the French philosopher who says: "Genius is a matter of guts."

Host Venturi told me about the origin and explanation of the abolition of railway sleeping cars, restaurant cars, and first-class carriages. Mussolini wanted this done to put everybody on the same level, and ordered it against the advice of the technicians. Mussolini said that he now feels the old revolutionary spirit more than ever. Meanwhile, the trains are disorderly, since the crowd is enormous and the accommodation limited. In Trieste last evening the Under-Secretary of the Postal Service had to be pushed into his train through the window, as all the corridors were too crowded to allow anyone to get through. Naturally the Government hasn't gained prestige by this incident.

APRIL 11, 1942. Mussolini visits the Society of the Friends of Japan. He likes more and more to declare himself "the foremost pro-Japanese in the world", but he gives to his affirmation a distinctly anti-German character. He spoke a few words of warm sympathy, and concluded his speech: "The Italian soldiers and the Japanese soldiers and the *other armies* of the Tripartite Alliance will wage war until victory."

De Peppo summarizes the situation from Ankara thus: "The Turks will not fight against us and they may, perhaps, be on our side if the fate of the war brings a definite success for the armies of the Axis. Enemy Number 1 is Russia, fear Number 2 is Germany. The Turkish ideal is that the last German soldier should fall upon the last Russian corpse. We are still very much under suspicion. In order to remove this suspicion it will be necessary to withdraw from the island of Castellorizzo, which

is considered our potential springboard against Turkey. But we cannot do that now. This gesture, at such an inopportune moment, would be interpreted as a sign of weakness and would have just the opposite results from those we are seeking.

APRIL 12, 1942. Nothing new.

APRIL 13, 1942. The Hungarian Chief of Staff comes to visit me, closely followed by Cavallero. He says nothing of any importance.

I had a long conversation with Donna Edvige, Mussolini's eldest sister. She asked to see me about a little favour, but this was obviously just a pretext. In reality she wanted to give me her impressions on the situation, listen to my own, and especially unburden her heart about a matter which has now become a national question: the Petacci family. She tells me, with much intelligence and great affection for her brother, what everybody is saying. She adds that she has proof in her hands concerning the shady business transactions of the Petacci clan and the scandal resulting from them. She has made up her mind to confront the Duce with it and talk over the situation. I was very reserved, and told her what she already understands quite well—my delicate position in the matter. Edvige told me that she had already talked about it last year, when it was said that Mussolini was going to the home of the Petacci family to play tennis. He had admitted going there, but definitely denied the tennis business.

Revel unburdened himself about the situation and expressed concern over the Duce's state of health, affirming that he saw him at times in such obvious pain as to be alarming. He wanted me to do something about it. But what? In the first place I am convinced that he is very well, and then, who has the courage to speak to him about a personal matter?

APRIL 14, 1942. The Japanese have proposed a tripartite declaration in favour of the independence of India and Arabia. First reactions in Berlin are unfavourable. Japanese suggestions for regions closer and closer to Europe are not welcome. Mussolini, on the other hand, wanted to agree to the proposal immediately.

APRIL 15, 1942. Laval is at the head of the Government in France. Here are the results of long German labour, concerning

which we have been kept entirely in the dark. Only after it was over did the German representative in Paris inform our Ambassador of what had happened, yet the matter concerns us directly. What promises have been made to the French in order to reach this conclusion? At whose expense? We shall see. For the moment it is hard to predict anything. But one thing is certain: Laval does not represent France, and if the Germans think they can conquer French hearts through him, they are mistaken, very much mistaken again.

APRIL 16, 1942. Nothing new.

APRIL 17, 1942. Nothing new.

APRIL 18, 1942. The Laval Government is formed. It is a Government of under-secretaries and of unknowns. It practically remains a Pétain-Darlan government. Thus France prepares for all three eventualities: a British victory, de Gaulle; a German victory, Laval; a compromise, Pétain. If only all this does not end to our disadvantage.

The Americans have bombed Tokyo and other Japanese cities. This is their first offensive action since the beginning of the war. I do not think that, for the moment, they can do great things, their preparation being far behind; but as time passes they will make their weight felt more and more—especially in the air.

APRIL 19, 1942. Mussolini was very much surprised at the Führer's order postponing to May 2nd the national German holiday because it fell on a Friday. He is right. These Germans, he says, who bark against Catholicism, show themselves to be slaves of a prejudice which is distinctly Christian in origin. But, above all, they show that they lack courage, and are not sure of themselves.

APRIL 20, 1942. A strange speech by Goebbels on the occasion of Hitler's birthday. He reaffirmed his faith in final victory in rather gloomy terms. But why, since it is repeated in many quarters that, now spring has come, the Germans can look to the Eastern Front with greater confidence? Even Mussolini, who ordinarily inclines towards optimistic interpretations, commented bitterly on Goebbels' speech.

Anfuso, on his return from Budapest, also speaks in a minor key. The Hungarians affirm that German preparation for the

offensive is not what is claimed, and on the Southern Front supplies are low.

APRIL 21, 1942. The Germans intend to procrastinate for a few days over their reply to the Japanese about the declaration of independence for India and Arabia.

Bismarck tells d'Aieta that the German Consul-General in Milan receives many offensive letters. The last one ran like this: "We hear that you are looking for a new residence. We offer you one which is very beautiful, and worthy of you and of your people and of your leader. The address is so and so." The Consul-General went solemnly to the address indicated, and found himself at the doors of the gaol.

Jacomoni makes rather a good report on the Albanian situation. The only difficulty is the shortage of materials, which makes it impossible for us to continue our public works.

APRIL 22, 1942. The Duce informs me that Marshal Kesselring, on his return from Germany, brought Hitler's approval for the landing operation on Malta. It appears that the island has really been damaged by aerial bombardments. This does not, however, alter the fact that the coastal defences are still intact. Therefore, in the opinion of some naval experts, the undertaking is still dangerous and in any case would be expensive.

APRIL 23, 1942. I accompany Jacomoni to the Duce to discuss the question of the Albanian flag. The Albanian Nationalists object to the flag as it is now, the eagle framed in the fasces and topped by the crown of Savoy, and protest their respect for their own national symbols. We now revive the old flag, which will bear on the standard the Fascio Littorio and the blue band of Savoy. Naturally, before making the Duce's decision public, I shall confer with the King.

Boscarelli has died in Buenos Aires. As a diplomat he was my first friend in Rio de Janeiro, and had always been affectionate and devoted to me. He wasn't gifted with exceptional talent, but he was honest, a good worker, and courteous—all things which made him a very useful diplomatic agent. His death makes me very sad.

APRIL 24, 1942. The Japanese military attaché, in talking to Prunas, voiced his violent criticism of the German attitude

and the German way of conducting political warfare—which is all wrong, according to the Japanese. If the Germans continue at this pace, they will meet with some painful surprises. I showed the Duce my notes on the subject and his comments were in agreement with the Japanese.

During the evening Mackensen proposes that the Duce shall meet the Führer at Salzburg by the end of the month. Mussolini would like to delay until May 1st. Hitler sends word by telephone that the delay is not possible “for reasons independent of his will”. The meeting is thus arranged for the 29th and 30th.

Riccardi gave vent to his feelings about Petacci's brother and his gang. He says that he has talked openly to the Duce about it. I confined myself to listening. This is a hornets' nest I don't want to put my head into.

APRIL 25, 1942. Nothing new.

APRIL 26, 1942. Nothing new.

APRIL 27, 1942. A long speech by Hitler. It is difficult to comment upon it because by now all his speeches are more or less alike. The tone is not very optimistic. More than anything else he looks to the past, how and why the Russian winter was so severe yet they were able to overcome it. But there is not a hint of what all are waiting for—the ending of the war. On the contrary, he declared that he is making every preparation to face another winter on the Russian Front with more adequate forces. Then he asked for full power over the German people. He already exercises complete power, but by appealing for it in this way he has aroused the feeling that the internal situation in Germany needs still more rigid control. In general, the speech has had a depressing effect in Italy, while Mussolini has judged it to be “an excellent and strong speech”.

Marcello Vaccari, the Prefect of Venice, speaks to me of the extravagances of young Petacci, how he has caused a big scandal in Venice, and how Buffarini had suppressed the reports of the carabinieri which Vaccari himself had given him. According to Petrognano<sup>310</sup>, Buffarini is financing Clara Petacci with two hundred thousand lire a month. Buffarini

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<sup>310</sup> Petrognano: Italian Director of Public Health.

feels he can act with complete impunity. However, now there is really too much talk about the affair.

APRIL 28, 1942. We leave for Salzburg. This is a meeting that was desired by the Germans, and for which, as usual, they have given us no indication of an agenda. During the journey Cavallero talks to me about the Malta operation. He realizes that it is a tough nut. The preparations under way are being made with maximum attention and care, and with the conviction that the attack is essential. This is to give the maximum incentive to those concerned. But whether the operation will take place, or when, are other matters, and Cavallero makes no commitments. As is his nature, he digs himself in behind a great quantity of ifs and buts. He talks about the future progress of the war. We must win this year or, at least, place ourselves in a position to win. Otherwise, dangers will increase.

APRIL 29, 1942. Arrival at Salzburg (the Puhl station). The usual scene: Hitler, Ribbentrop, the usual people, the usual ceremony. We are staying at Klessheim Castle. This is a grandiose building, once owned by the prince-bishops of Salzburg, which has now become a guest-house for the Führer. It is very luxurious and well arranged: furniture, hangings, carpets, all having been brought from France. Probably they did not pay very much for them.

There is much cordiality, which puts me on my guard. The courtesy of the Germans is always in inverse ratio to their good fortune. Hitler looks tired. He is strong, determined, and talkative; but he is tired. The winter months in Russia have weighed heavily upon him. I see for the first time that he has many grey hairs.

Hitler talks with the Duce, I talk with Ribbentrop, but in two separate rooms, and the same record is played in both. Ribbentrop, particularly, plays his usual record. I have reported the conversation elsewhere. Napoleon, the Beresina, the drama of 1812, all this is brought to life in what he says. But the ice of Russia has been conquered by the genius of Hitler. This is the strong dish that is served up to me. But what of to-morrow? What does the future hold? On this matter Ribbentrop is less

explicit. An offensive against the Russians in the south with the oil wells as a politico-military objective? When Russia's sources of oil are exhausted she will be brought to her knees. Then the British Conservatives, and even Churchill himself, who, after all, is a sensible man, will bow in order to save what remains of their mauled Empire. Thus spoke Ribbentrop. But what if all this doesn't happen? What if the British, who are stubborn, decide to continue? What course must be followed to change their minds? Aeroplanes and submarines, says Ribbentrop. We turn back to the 1940 formula. But this formula failed then and was put up in the attic. Now they pull it out again, and, after having dusted it thoroughly, they want to offer it to us again. I am little convinced by it, and say so to Ribbentrop, much to Alfieri's dismay. Alfieri understands very little of what he hears but always says yes.

America is a big bluff. This slogan is repeated by everyone, big and little, in the conference rooms and in the antechambers. In my opinion, the thought of what the Americans can and will do disturbs them all, and the Germans shut their eyes to it. But this does not keep the more intelligent and the more honest from thinking about what America can do, and they feel shivers running down their spines.

In regard to France they feel more doubt than friendship. Laval, too, is hardly convincing. The true spirit of the French is more clearly expressed by the gesture of the compositor who risked his life to produce the paper with the name of Pétain changed to Putain than by all the words of the collaborationists in Vichy pay. In Germany they have no illusions, and would certainly have suppressed anybody who did such a thing.

Hitler talks, talks, talks, talks. Mussolini suffers—he, who is in the habit of talking himself, and who, instead, has to remain practically silent. On the second day, after lunch, when everything had been said, Hitler talked uninterruptedly for an hour and forty minutes. He omitted absolutely no argument: war and peace, religion and philosophy, art and history. Mussolini automatically looked at his wrist-watch, I had my mind on my own business, and only Cavallero, who is a phenomenon

of servility, pretended he was listening in ecstasy, continually nodding his head in approval. The Germans, however, dreaded the ordeal less than we did. Poor people. They have to endure it every day, and I am certain there isn't a gesture, a word, or a pause which they don't know by heart. General Jodl, after an epic struggle, finally went to sleep on the divan. Keitel was yawning, but he succeeded in keeping his head up. He was too close to Hitler to let himself go as he would have liked to do.

One does not see any physically fit men in the streets in the cities and towns of Germany. Women, children, and old men only. Also foreign labourers, slaves of the earth. Edda, who visited a camp of our Italian workers, found one who had been wounded in the arm by a brutal guard with a scythe. She told Hitler, who, in a fit of anger, ordered all sorts of arrests and investigations. Which, however, will not change the course of things.

Losses in Russia are heavy. Ribbentrop says two hundred and seventy thousand dead. Our General Marras raises it to seven hundred thousand. And with amputations, frost-bite, and the seriously ill who will not recover by the end of the war, the figure rises to three million.

The British Air Force is striking hard. Rostock and Lübeck have been literally razed to the ground. Cologne has been heavily hit. The Germans strike back at the English cities but with less violence. Which only partly consoles the German population, accustomed as it has always been to hit but never to be hit back. Which leads many Germans, who have devastated half Europe, to weep about the "brutality of the British, who make many innocent Prussian families homeless". The worst of it is that they really feel this way.

Mussolini is satisfied with the visit and with his conversations with Hitler. This always happens. But, although he doesn't say it openly, this time he is led to think deeply about many things which are not yet apparent, but which one can feel in the air.



This is the way he summarized the situation: "The German machine is still formidably powerful, but has suffered a great deal of wear and tear. Now it will make a new and imposing effort. It must attain its goal."

The visit didn't arouse very much interest in Italy, and the war goes on. Real interest would come if people could begin to see peace in the offing. But peace has already been brushed aside by Hitler's speech, which could not have produced a worse impression. Everybody expected the announcement of an offensive against the Russians. Instead, he announced an offensive against the German people.

MAY 3, 1942. Yesterday a meeting of the Council of Ministers. The Duce summarized the results of his visit in a brief address. Grandi has found it "discomforting".

In agreement with Berlin, we reply to Tokyo that the moment has not yet come to make a declaration about Arab and Indian independence. It would be a platonic gesture with no practical results, and perhaps might have bad consequences. Only if and when the armies of the Axis have reached a point where they can impose the declaration of independence with armed force can they indulge in such a gesture.

I have given the Duce the stenographic report of my conferences with von Ribbentrop. I had given it a somewhat controversial flavour and thought that this would displease him. Instead, he found it satisfactory and has kept it because to-morrow he wants to show it to the King personally.

D'Aroma<sup>311</sup> has come to tell me, with a tragic and mysterious air, all those commonplaces that everybody knows about the situation of the regime and the Duce. Nonsense. Naturally, this is no time for elation, nor for many reasons could it be, but the people approve of the Duce whole-heartedly. In order to sense this, one had only to be at his railway carriage window during his journey from Tarvisio to Rome. There was not a person who, on recognizing the Duce, did not give signs of happy exaltation. Exactly as before. So why, then, should we take a few professional gossipers seriously?

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<sup>311</sup> D'Aroma: Journalist; a provincial secretary of the Fascist Party.

MAY 4, 1942. I report to the King on the visit and tell him that the Duce will personally give him the memorandum dictated by me. As usual, I speak quite frankly, and the King shows that he appreciates it. But to-day he looked more tired than usual. He makes some anti-German remarks. "If they did not need us they would cast us aside like old rags. I always tell the Duce that we must not trust those ugly Germans, and I know that he does not like my comments." However, in general he speaks calmly about the development of the conflict and is convinced that in Great Britain the situation is graver than it is thought to be.

I also speak to the King on the question of the Albanian flag. We talk about modifying it by removing the fasces and crown of Savoy, and putting these symbols on the standard. He accepts because needs must.

I receive Bose, head of the Hindu Nationalists. He is upset when he learns that the declaration in favour of independence for India has been postponed sine die. He believes that in this way we are playing Japan's game, and that she will act on her own account without considering the interests of the Axis. He now thinks that British domination in India is coming to an end. British forces are small and the Indian troops have no desire to fight. Naturally, we must take Bose's declarations for what they are worth, because he has an axe to grind.

MAY 5, 1942. The English have occupied Madagascar. It was to be expected, especially since Laval had shouted from the housetops that he desired Nipponese occupation in order to forestall the Anglo-Saxons. Mussolini even thinks that Laval acted in this way in order to press the British to act and that he established an alibi in advance. He wanted Berlin informed of his suspicion.

I go with Bose to the Duce. A long conference without any new developments, except the fact that Mussolini allowed himself to be persuaded by the arguments produced by Bose to obtain a tripartite declaration in favour of Indian independence. He has telegraphed the Germans proposing—contrary to the Salzburg decisions—proceeding at once with the declaration. I feel that Hitler will not agree to it very very willingly.

Conference with Monsignor Bernardini, Papal Nuncio at

Berne. He entertains considerable hope for a compromise peace in the autumn, after the offensive in Russia. I disillusioned him. Germany is, and for a long time will be, extremely intransigent. Not even far in the future do I see what could be a good basis for discussion by the two parties in conflict. I advised the Holy See not to embark on a course that is surely bound to fail.

MAY 6, 1942. Nothing new.

MAY 7, 1942. Nothing new.

MAY 8, 1942. A great naval battle has taken place in the Coral Sea. Both sides claim great successes, but as yet we have no details as to how things have really gone.

An item which is important in Italian political and social life: Vidussoni wanted to close the golf courses. I questioned him, and he, who is very simple-minded and is never able to make an evasive answer, said candidly that he intended to do this because "golf is an aristocratic sport". That's a fine reason! It reminds me of those people we cudgelled in 1920 and 1921. The affair has, in itself, relatively little importance, but it has a great deal of importance as an indication of what will be done in the future. However, they must not go too far, because there are many people who are beginning to be annoyed. Let us not ask for greater rights than others merely because we wear a collar and wash our feet. But neither let us be disposed to accept this privation just for the reasons given. The Italian middle class is the one that endures the greatest sacrifices, that wages the war, and that constitutes the backbone of the country. Must we really strike at it every day and harass it to the point of making it an implacable enemy of the regime? I consider it a great mistake, because nothing is gained and one does not even earn the gratitude of the masses, which are inconsistent and shifting as the sands.

MAY 9, 1942. It is not yet clear how things have gone in the Coral Sea. The Anglo-American communiqués, although they admit some unspecified losses, make loud claims of victory. On the other hand, the Japanese do the same. It is to be noted that the declaration of the Japanese General Staff placed the honour of the Emperor himself at stake. Therefore, they should not lie, although war lies are more or less like those that

do not compromise the honour of a woman—permissible lies.

I accompanied Dindina<sup>312</sup> to the altar for her first communion. She was as pretty as a dream and was very much moved. I, too, was somewhat moved.

MAY 10, 1942. Mussolini has left for Sardinia on a visit of military inspection. He will be away for a week.

Senise makes his usual attack on Buffarini, who, according to him, is at the bottom of all the filthy doings in Italy. Now he hopes he has finally caught him by the throat, through the scandal over the Aryanization of the Jews. The gang, which apparently was headed by Lepara, was, in fact, directed by Buffarini, who gorged himself with the profits. Buffarini has a bad conscience, and he trembles.

Senise has also sent me the reports of the questioning of the four bad boys who wanted to cause a coup d'état, starting it in a manner of which I disapprove greatly, that is, with my assassination. More than their perversity, it is their idiocy which impresses one. They talked about these projects in the presence of people they were meeting for the first time and who were obviously police spies. I think that, except for one, they should be given their liberty with a kick in the behind. They are not worth anything more. The Duce, talking about the matter, said to Senise: "I do not know whether the appointment of Vidussoni was a good or a bad thing." Well, it was a bad thing. But it is interesting that the question is raised so soon.

MAY 11, 1942. A violent speech by Churchill. He threatens to use gas against German cities if Hitler uses gas on the Russian front. I hope that neither of them will carry out such a sinister plan.

Hungarian uneasiness is expressed by this little story which is going the rounds in Budapest. The Hungarian Minister declares war on the United States, but the official who receives the communication is not very well informed about European matters and hence asks several questions:

He asks: "Is Hungary a republic?"

"No, it is a kingdom."

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<sup>312</sup> Dindina Ciano: Ciano's daughter.

"Then you have a king?"

"No, we have an admiral."

"Then you have a fleet?"

"No, we have no sea."

"Do you have any claims, then?"

"Yes."

"Against America?"

"No."

"Against Great Britain?"

"No."

"Against Russia?"

"No."

"But against whom do you have these claims?"

"Against Rumania."

"Then will you declare war on Rumania?"

"No, sir. We are allies."

There is a great deal of truth in this series of paradoxes.

MAY 12, 1942. Cavallero outlines our programme for carrying on the war in the Mediterranean. At the end of the month Rommel will attack in Libya with the aim of defeating the British forces. If he can, he will take Tobruk and will go as far as the old boundaries; if not, he will limit himself to forestalling an attack by the enemy by striking first. Then all the forces will be concentrated for an attack on Malta. The Germans are sending a parachute division commanded by General Student and are furnishing us with technical material for the assault. It will take place in July or August at the latest. Afterwards it will no longer be possible because of the weather. Cavallero declares: "I know that it is a difficult undertaking and that it will cost us many casualties, and I know, too, that I am staking my head on this undertaking. But I am the one who wants it because I consider it absolutely essential for the future development of the war. If we take Malta, Libya will be safe. If not, the situation of the colony will always be precarious. I shall personally assume command of the operation. The Prince of Piedmont was considered, but for many reasons it was decided to leave him out." Cavallero does not conceal the fact that he hopes to derive a great deal of personal glory from this operation. But I believe he will never acquire it.

I saw the King at the Exhibition of the German Academy. The works are few and rather second-rate.

MAY 13, 1942. Colonel Casero does not share Cavallero's easy enthusiasms for the attack on Malta. Malta's anti-aircraft defence is still very efficient, and their naval defence is entirely intact. The interior of the island is one solid nest of machine-guns. The landing of paratroops would be very difficult; a great part of the planes are bound to be shot down before they can deposit their human cargo. The same must be said for landings by sea. Again, it must be remembered that two days of minor aerial bombardment by us only served to stiffen resistance. In these last attacks we, as well as the Germans, have lost many feathers. Even Fougier is anxious about a landing operation, and the German General Lörzer did not conceal his open disagreement. The supporters of the undertaking are Kesselring and Cavallero, the latter going through his usual tricks to put the responsibility on the shoulders of others.

Arpinati asks for a small favour. He is, as always, calm and dignified, and not at all concerned about his own personal position. He does not consider the internal situation of the country very good, and condemns two things: the too intimate union with the Germans, whom he does not like, and any demonstration of leftist tendencies.

MAY 14, 1942. Nothing new.

MAY 15, 1942. In Rome there is a good deal of gossip about the fact that there was a dance last Saturday at the Senni's<sup>313</sup> house, which was attended by a young secretary at the American Embassy. No one of those present had the courage to protest against it, which is extremely deplorable. It seems that several of the attachés of our Ministry for Foreign Affairs were present, and for this reason I have asked the chief of police to make a careful investigation. Naturally, this gesture by a few inconsiderate irresponsibles is causing a great rumpus and casts discredit on an entire class of people, which, as a matter of fact, is giving its share of blood and faith to the conflict.

MAY 16, 1942. Mussolini returns. He is very pleased with

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<sup>313</sup> Count Carlo Senni: Italian Army Officer in the African campaign; family socially prominent in Rome.

his visit and what he has seen. He doesn't seem at all tired; in fact, he is sunburned and thinner. He talks with enthusiasm about the people of Sardinia, from whom he didn't hear one protest about the scarcity of bread, or one plea for peace, "which would not have been lacking in the Po Valley, where there have been too many political experiments". Even with regard to the defence of the island, his visit has been reassuring: good troops, efficient armaments, and, in possible invasion zones, there is malaria which would decimate the British troops in a few days, just as those of Frederick Barbarossa were decimated when they halted between Portonaccio and Ponte Galera.

Fougier inveighs against Cavallero, whom he accuses of being a dangerous clown, ready to follow every German whim without dignity, and a liar. He wanted to give vent to his feelings to the Duce, but I dissuaded him, at least for the time being. Things are not yet ripe for Cavallero's dismissal, which, however, will be necessary at the proper time. Fougier also mentions Rommel's plans to attack on the 28th, and to drive forward as far as the valley of the Nile. Cavallero, who in Rome says that he does not want such a risky offensive, sings a different song in Derna, encouraging Rommel to "make the maximum effort".

MAY 17, 1942. Starace. A brief visit to recommend two people to me. He is calmer than before, which makes me think that he has found some philosophy—if nothing more material.

Gariboldi. He will leave shortly for Russia to assume command of the expeditionary force. I have known him for many years, from the time of the capture of Addis Ababa. I have never had a very favourable opinion of him. Just now he seems even more tired and aged, notwithstanding the bleached-blondness of his heavy moustaches, trimmed *à la fin de siècle*. Cavallero has insisted on appointing him in order to get rid of Messe, who was beginning to acquire too much importance in the eyes of the Duce and of the country. Cavallero is a faithful follower of the theory which calls for the decapitation of poppies that grow too high. Gariboldi has been in Germany and has returned generally satisfied, but without clear ideas as to what is boiling in the kettle. However, he does not consider that

the total defeat of Russia will be possible before the winter, which raises some very serious problems for us since we shall soon have three hundred thousand men on the Eastern Front.

MAY 18, 1942. The Duce telephones me to tell Edda "to talk to no one, absolutely no one, about what she saw and observed in Germany". The explanation is that the King told him: "All Rome knows that in a German hospital there is an Italian labourer with his fingers cut off, and that your daughter energetically protested to Hitler." The Duce is concerned about this remark, and realizes that it is a manoeuvre to feed the anti-German resentment of the Italian people, seizing the chance when an important name is involved. "The King, who always plays the part of an anti-German," said Mussolini, "has given a daughter to a German, his son to a Belgian woman of German race, and there are many other marriages of the House of Savoy with Germans."

In Slovenia things are not going so well. The High Commissioner asks us to send twenty-four thousand men. It appears that the streets of Ljubljana are now unsafe for our troops; every doorway and every window hide potential danger.

All the youngsters who attended the dance in the Senni home, together with the American secretary, are now the object of Mussolini's just anger. Some of them, including the lady of the house, have been handcuffed. "The first to thank me," said the Duce, "should be her husband, because while he was fighting this flibbertigibbet was receiving the enemy in her home and dancing with them."

MAY 19, 1942. The English would like to send some hospital ships to Malta. Our Navy agrees in principle, but the Germans are against it. The Duce decides against it, "especially because his experience has taught him the many things it is possible to hide in hospital ships when the blockade would otherwise prevent their passage. Last winter we were able to deliver some timely supplies of petrol to Benghazi by making use of white ships"—ships of the Italian Red Cross.

Captain Dolmann, the S.S. man in Rome, has told d'Aieta that Himmler would like to come to Rome in October to talk things over with me, after the offensive in Russia that will certainly be brilliant but not decisive, so that we must prepare



ourselves for a winter which will be both materially and psychologically hard. This is interesting, especially because Himmler is the only man who really feels the pulse of the German people.

MAY 20, 1942. The Duce attached no importance to Dolmann's move. "Very well," he said. "We shall talk about it later. We know already that absolutely nothing will happen in Italy."

General Amè has secretly sent me two reports from General Marras on the morale of the German Army. According to the reports, it is bad from every point of view, discouragement has taken hold of everyone, and the idea of an unavoidable winter on the Russian Front brings absolute despair to the military. Suicides are numerous among those who prefer death to returning to the front. Marras doesn't draw any conclusion, but these are his premises.

The B.B.C. gives us to understand that Rommel's preparations for his coming offensive in Libya have not escaped their notice.

MAY 21, 1942. Mussolini has influenza. For the first time in many years I am told that he will not be at his office. I speak to him briefly over the telephone. His voice is hoarse and he has a bad cough. He must be in a very bad humour.

I speak with Colonna and some attachés who have returned from the United States. They say nothing sensational. They all agree in affirming, first, that the United States is not now in a position to do a great deal along military lines; second, that her industrial preparation is formidable and that within a few months we shall see a production of incalculable proportions; third, that the war is not popular, but that everyone is determined to fight even for twenty years, provided they get ultimately things settled; fourth, that feeling towards Italy is not at all hostile.

MAY 22, 1942. Nothing new.

MAY 23, 1942. The Duce telephoned indignantly, charging that the Japanese Ambassador, Shiratori, has made certain statements which are not acceptable: the dominion of the world belongs to Japan, the Mikado is the only god on earth, and that both Hitler and Mussolini must become resigned to this reality. I remember Shiratori during his short stay in Rome. He was a fanatical extremist, but, above all, he was very ill-bred.

Bismarck has confirmed to d'Aieta that Himmler is playing his own game by inciting people to grumble. Is this true? For the time being I think that the rumour must be accepted with a great deal of reserve.

MAY 24, 1942. Nothing new.

MAY 25, 1942. Nothing new.

MAY 26, 1942. Mussolini now interests himself only in the coming offensive in Libya, and he is definitely optimistic. He maintains that Rommel "will arrive at the Delta" unless he is stopped, "not by the British, but by our own generals". Even for the taking of Malta he makes good "forecasts". "A surprise has been prepared which will give formidable results". But he didn't say what the surprise is.

Serrano wants to come to Italy and Mussolini is favourable to the visit. I suggest that the meeting might take place at Leghorn toward the middle of June. I don't think we shall have important things to say, but it is well not to throw away this Spanish card which has cost us blood and gold.

The situation between Hungary and Rumania is more and more tense. Mariassy<sup>314</sup> sent a note to-day which is something of an alarm signal. I confess one suspicion, which is that the Hungarians may be showing such concern in order to avoid any deep commitments in the offensive against Russia.

MAY 27, 1942. Sorrentino, on his return from Russia, gives his impressions and makes forecasts for the future. The first are not pleasant and the second not comforting. The brutality of the Germans, which has now reached the proportions of a continuous crime, stands out from his words so vividly and so movingly as to leave one in no doubt of its truthfulness. Massacres of entire populations, raping, killing of children—all these are matters of daily occurrence. Against this there is the cold Bolshevik decision to resist and fight to the end, certain of victory. On the other hand, the morale of the Germans is lower than might be imagined. "The coming four months may mark the beginning of a catastrophe, the like of which has never been seen."

Fougier sends the first news of Rommel's attack in Libya.

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<sup>314</sup> Mariassy: Hungarian Minister to Italy.

There is action by the Air Force and armoured columns are advancing, but it is too early to give even a partial account of what is happening. It appears that Rommel has somewhat reduced his original programme, which was very comprehensive. Now he wants to reach the Nile Valley.

Bismarck told d'Aieta that food rations in Germany will soon be cut twenty-five per cent. Anna Maria Bismarck told me candidly yesterday evening: "I am pro-German because I have married Otto, but I am anti-Nazi."

MAY 28, 1942. I understand that the Duce asked to see the declarations that I was going to make in the Senate on Saturday, so I sent him a copy of my speech. I hate to make speeches these days. One runs the risk of being called a liar or of being banal.

Pittalis, returning from Munich on his appointment as Ambassador to Buenos Aires, paints the German situation in dark colours. In 1942 careful decisions must be made because the people have made every extreme sacrifice, and no more sacrifices can be expected of them. I must say that Pittalis, up to now, has, if anything, been guilty of optimism.

Venturi, Minister of Communications, says that sleeping cars and first-class carriages will shortly be put back into operation on the Italian railways. The demagogic experiment of abolishing them did not have good results but just the opposite.

Pavolini tells me that the Duce will have a man who evaded military service, shot in broad daylight at the Coliseum as if he had been a murderer. I ask myself whether this lugubrious publicity will be of any help to the morale of the Italian people, whose psychology is a great deal more complex than is generally believed.

MAY 29, 1942. My speech to the Senate is approved by the Duce, without a word changed, which is something unusual for him, especially as he is in a very bad humour because of the drought which threatens to reduce the harvest by a million or so quintals of grain.

MAY 30, 1942. I spoke to the Senate. It appears that the speech was very much liked, as the senators, who are usually critical and reserved, were rather enthusiastic. They applauded very much and stood throughout the last part of my speech.

Mussolini wanted a detailed report of the meeting and didn't hide his satisfaction.

In the afternoon I leave for Leghorn.

MAY 31, 1942. In Leghorn. A day of rest and fishing. But this does not save me from complaints about food, which is very short. Wine is lacking, and so is everything else. Renato, my fisherman, has lost thirty pounds in a few months, and he tells me that the members of his family are losing weight at the same rate. In spite of this there is good humour and faith in the future.

I had a long and interesting conversation with Carboni. At the moment he is commanding one of the assault divisions which is to participate in the Malta operation. He is decidedly against it. He is convinced that we shall have heavy losses and that nothing will come of it. He takes it out on Cavallero, whom he considers to be an intriguer and a man of bad faith. He is also very pessimistic about the Russian Front. He doesn't think that the Germans can undertake any operations of far-reaching proportions during the summer. It is a war of position rather than anything else. From this he draws the most sinister conclusions about the German future. Carboni is a general of great ability. One must not forget, however, that he was dismissed by the Secret Military Intelligence for his anti-German attitude, and that he is the son of an American mother.

JUNE 1, 1942. The King praised my speech, of which I had sent him the complete text through Acquarone. As usual he takes it out on the Germans, whom he considers capable of all sorts of deceit and treachery. He shows interest in France and in the restoration of the Spanish monarchy, of which he naturally approves, though at the same time he judges the future King with considerable reserve. He praises the future Queen, "who has a big nose, but a lot of good sense and clear judgment". He has modified his ideas about the outlook for the future. At first he believed in a British collapse, but now he does not talk about it any more, and believes "that we must come to a compromise peace because no one will win, and the nations will add to their war sufferings much inevitable disillusionment."

Mussolini repeats his praise of my speech and speaks with restraint about our offensive in Libya. According to him the

main clash has not yet taken place because of the scarcity of supplies for the mechanized units. At the German Embassy, on the other hand, they are not satisfied with the course of things. It now seems that Tobruk has become an impossible objective, and yet Cavallero was speaking of Cairo! True enough, on the day the attack began he went to bed with a very prudent attack of influenza.

JUNE 2, 1942. The offensive in Libya has not yet taken a definite turn. On the whole, the Duce is optimistic, but at High Command Headquarters they are a little less so. Mussolini also thought of going to the front, but "he wouldn't like a repetition of what happened in Albania, when they made him a witness of an unfortunate battle".

Riccardi talks to me very critically about the Petacci family and about the business deals of Dr. Marcello Petacci. It appears that Riccardi had an open quarrel with them, and a violent exchange of words over the telephone. He showed me an interesting document. A non-commissioned officer of the carabinieri wrote in a report to his superiors that "a certain individual (whose name I do not remember) is a crook, but is also the lover of a certain Petacci, sister of the Duce's mistress; therefore I can't touch him". This is incredible but true. I saw it with my own eyes.

Gambara writes that he has been retired. This is Cavallero's victory. Gambara asks for neither favour nor pity, but speaks sincerely. Was it necessary to harm the man who covered our flag with glory in Spain?

JUNE 3, 1942. Optimism prevails at the Palazzo Venezia on the progress of operations in Libya. The Duce talks to-day about the imminent siege of Tobruk and about the possibility of carrying the action as far as Mersa Matruh. If these are roses . . . they will bloom. The Duce was very hostile to the Vatican because of an article appearing in the *Osservatore Romano* over the signature of Falchetto. The article spoke about Greek philosophy, but the real purpose was obvious. Guariglia will take the matter up with the Secretariat of State of the Vatican. "I hate priests in their cassocks," said Mussolini, "but I hate and loathe even more those without cassocks who are vile Guelphs, a breed to be wiped out."

I had lunch with Bottai. He said more or less the usual things, adding that as a matter of personal experience he found the Duce "spiritually and intellectually very low" in the last few months. I don't know on what he bases his impressions.

The Germans have prevented Alfieri going to Cologne, and barred his way at the Düsseldorf station. Evidently the ruins of the city are such that they prefer our Ambassador not to see them. Also, Essen was bombed last night, and, it would seem, quite as heavily as Cologne.

According to Colonel Casero, the battle of Libya has become stationary, resolving itself into a battle of attrition.

JUNE 4, 1942. Cavallero describes the results of the Libyan battle as "considerable", which, for anybody who knows the mysterious language of this mountebank general, means that things have gone very badly. He summarizes the situation as follows: it was a good thing we attacked, because the enemy was preparing to attack. But who says so? He goes on to say that we used up their supplies and thus won a tactical success. In reply to a question he says he doesn't believe that we can reach Tobruk or any more distant objective, but this does not prevent us from entertaining hopes. (Sic!) It is a little early to judge. We shall know later if this offensive of ours was good or bad.

I saw Messe on his return from Russia. He sees red because Cavallero made the old and stupid Gariboldi commander of the Army over his head, in spite of Messe's excellent record. Like everybody else who has had anything to do with the Germans, he detests them, and says that the only way of dealing with them would be to punch them in the stomach. He thinks the Russian Army is still strong and well armed, and that any idea of a complete collapse of the Soviets is wishful thinking. The Germans will still have some successes, perhaps some big successes, but they will solve nothing, and the winter will find them still in the field with further shortage of materials. Messe draws no conclusions, but does not conceal his doubts, which are very serious.

JUNE 5, 1942. Grandi tells me that the Council of Ministers will to-morrow, in connection with the doubling of the income tax, introduce the oath as a way of ascer-

taining income, with all the consequences that this implies. This means that for the first time in the history of our tax system they are thinking of imprisoning tax evaders. This might do in countries educated in fiscal matters, but not with us, where everyone would take false oaths. If we closed our eyes to this, we would become ridiculous, or, if we enforced the law, we would have to enlarge our prisons to the point where half of the budget would go for the maintenance of prisoners. Thus Revel, having taken everything from the Italians, wants also to take their honour. . . .

JUNE 6, 1942. Meeting of the Council of Ministers. Mussolini inveighs violently against merchants, of whom one hundred and thirty-two thousand have already been denounced. He accuses them of constituting another army which stabs the State in the back while it is engaged in a very hard war. Thus there will be new and tougher penalties added to those already set down. On the other hand, the tax oath, invented by Revel, was stillborn. The provision has been withdrawn. Naturally, it will be pulled out again, because the "Red Count", as they call this new Philippe Egalité<sup>315</sup> Minister of Finance of ours, loses no opportunity of imposing his demagogic policies.

Cavallero judges the situation in Libya as "logical". This is an adjective which he has trotted out again and which he hasn't used since the time he was getting beaten in Albania. In the meantime, he stays in bed with his strange and rather suspicious illness.

JUNE 7, 1942. Nothing new.

JUNE 8, 1942. Nothing new.

JUNE 9, 1942. Our military intelligence has uncovered a centre of espionage in the German Embassy. Dr. Sauer, a cultural attaché, has already been arrested and has confessed. He made it clear that he did not work for money but out of hatred for Nazism and Fascism. He turned over information of a military nature to the Swiss military attaché. It also seems that a German colonel, an aide of von Rintelen, is also mixed up in the affair. The Duce commented bitterly on the matter and is afraid that it may damage von Mackensen, the Am-

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<sup>315</sup> Philippe Egalité, Duc d'Orleans (1747-93): Called Citoyen Egalité by the Paris Commune, but later sent to the guillotine by them.

bassador. Bismarck, who has spoken on the subject with d'Aieta, did not attribute much importance to what has happened. He says that Sauer is a pederast and that he has been induced by his vice to commit this serious offence.

On Mussolini's order the newspapers have for some days tried to show that during the 1914-18 War the food situation in the country was worse than it is to-day. It is a sort of propaganda that produces the opposite effect to that intended. We were all living then, and our memories are too fresh to accept these statements. Pavolini has, in fact, told me that the Duce complains that the journalists do not know how to carry on this campaign efficiently. In fact all those whom Pavolini approached have refused to write what was asked of them.

JUNE 10, 1942. A ceremony in honour of naval heroes at the monument to the unknown soldier. As usual, the sailors and the cadets of Leghorn made a superb showing. However, the public showed little enthusiasm. No applause anywhere along the line of march.

In Dalmatia the situation is very tense. The rebels, after having overwhelmed one of our brigades at Knin, are advancing towards Zara. Bastianini, who hurried to Rome, asserts that we haven't the minimum forces necessary to engage the rebels, and their occupation of Dalmatia is to be feared. In the region of Fiume, also, there is a great deal of ferment. I talked with Testa,<sup>316</sup> who is an energetic man who knows how to assume responsibility. Now Mussolini is furious with him, because without even a semblance of a trial he hanged five rebels whom he found wearing shoes taken from our dead soldiers. Apart from the hangings, which really are not in our tradition, recalling as they do the Austrian mentality of bygone days, Testa succeeds in keeping order, and the rebels tremble at the very mention of his name.

Argentina protests strongly against the sinking of the *Victoria* by Axis submarines. Malbran,<sup>317</sup> who is pro-Italian and who has always been an optimist, now begins to see difficulties in the future relations between our two countries.

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<sup>316</sup> General Testa: In command of Italian troops in Dalmatia.

<sup>317</sup> Manuel Malbran: Argentine Ambassador to Italy.



JUNE 11, 1942. Bir Hakeim has been taken. The garrison resisted strongly, because it contained many Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, and Jews convinced that there would be no pity for them. Now we shall see if the action can be followed up or will stop with this local success. This morning the Duce expressed the opinion that it will be difficult to occupy Tobruk. The action to date has cost us great losses.

I talked to Mussolini about Gambara. It appears that Cavallero wishes to make an investigation even into the Spanish war period. This is a shame, because in Spain Gambara was the only general who brought glory to our colours. The Duce agreed and will put a stop to it. Every day Cavallero is becoming more and more harmful to the Army and to the country.

Pareschi is optimistic about the food situation, even though the heat of the last few days has greatly damaged the grain harvest. At any rate, he is convinced that the coming winter will be less hard than the last.

Bismarck telephoned Blasco d'Aieta about an eventual alliance between America, Britain, and Russia, and about an American commitment for the opening of a second front against the Germans. This sounds like an injection to keep the Russians on their feet. We must have further news before forming an opinion on the subject.

JUNE 12, 1942. Mussolini is more and more irritated against the *Osservatore Romano* because of certain articles against the regime signed by Falchetto in which there really is a subtle vein of poison. He has decided to have its director, Conte della Torre, arrested. I insisted that this act, bound to produce a great crisis with the Vatican, should be avoided, that we have no need of crises now. He wasn't persuaded, but I hope that he will reconsider his decision.

Lequio's<sup>318</sup> reports connect Serrano's visit with the question of the monarchy. Serrano has his visa for Switzerland, where the King of Spain is at this time. Mussolini is very much against the restoration of the monarchy and spoke along this line for a long time to-day. But nothing can be done about it. The monarchy will not solve anything, but all Spaniards want

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<sup>318</sup> Francesco Lequio: Italian Ambassador to Spain.

it. Therefore, if there is a restoration, it is better that we should support it than that it should take place without us or against our wishes. From Leghorn I shall take Serrano to luncheon with the King at San Rossore.

I saw Serena. He is just back from Croatia. He speaks despondently about the morale of the Army. He says, however, that a formula to improve it exists: kick out Cavallero. Every day he is less respected and more hated. General Guzzoni told me the same thing, but he is too much involved in the matter to be objective.

I learned from Bigliardi that the destroyer *Usodimare* has been sunk by mistake by one of our own submarines.

JUNE 13, 1942. Nothing new. Off to Leghorn. Bad weather.

JUNE 14, 1942. Nothing new.

JUNE 15, 1942. Serrano arrives. The city greets him with heartfelt enthusiasm and with a formidable south-west wind.

JUNE 16, 1942. At lunch with His Majesty. Conversation is conventional, but the King makes a very shrewd statement which I must set down. Serrano states that Britain, through Samuel Hoare,<sup>319</sup> spends ten million pesetas a month on British propaganda in Spain. The King commented: "This is a lot of money, but fortunately experience teaches that a great part of these funds sticks to the fingers of the propagandists, and those who are to be propagandized get only the crumbs. This is a good thing, otherwise God only knows how many revolutions there would be."

JUNE 17, 1942. Nothing new.

JUNE 18, 1942. Nothing new.

JUNE 19, 1942. I return to Rome. I made some notes on my conversations with Serrano. The Duce is still at Riccione.

JUNE 20, 1942. I thought that after what had taken place in Libya and at sea I would find the Duce in a boastful mood. Instead, he is reserved in his judgment and outlook. Nor does he give way to easy optimism. He is preparing to go to Africa if Tobruk is taken.

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<sup>319</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare (now Lord Templewood): Negotiated the Hoare-Laval Pact. Ambassador to Spain, 1940-4.

General Carboni has come to Rome to talk over the Malta enterprise, which is set for the time of the next new moon. He is convinced, technically convinced, that we are heading for an unheard-of disaster. Preparations have been childish, equipment is lacking and inadequate. The landing troops will never succeed in landing, or, if they land, they are doomed to total destruction. All the commanders are convinced of this, but no one dares to speak for fear of reprisals by Cavallero. But I am more than ever of the opinion that the undertaking will not take place.

The Duce receives Serrano, who repeats more or less what he said at Leghorn. Mussolini expresses hostility to monarchies, which are potentially the natural enemies of totalitarian revolutions. He believes that in Spain the King will soon want to stifle Falangism. He cites some Italian precedents that tend to prove his point of view. As to the war, he makes predictions with absolute certainty on the success of the Axis, but foresees a very long war. He speaks of four or five years. He will see Serrano again before his departure. In to-day's conversation the Duce was particularly incisive and vivacious.

JUNE 21, 1942. Tobruk has fallen and the British have left twenty-five thousand prisoners in our hands. This is a great success for us and opens the way for new developments. On the other hand, I learned from a conversation with Bigliardi that the results of our aerial-naval battle were a great deal more modest than had been announced. The merchant ships were, in fact, hit, and many were sunk, but the British naval losses were limited to a cruiser probably sunk and a destroyer sunk.

Riccardi renews his broadsides against the Petaccis. He also denounces an illegal traffic in gold, which involves Buffarini. Riccardi, who is very violent and stubborn, is quite capable of starting a scandal. We shall see what develops.

Amè is pessimistic in judging the internal Anglo-American situation, but more so in judging the German situation. He, too, repeats the formula about the coming four months being decisive. I think three months will be enough to show what is coming.

JUNE 22, 1942. The Duce is in very good humour and is preparing to go to Africa. In reality he was the man behind the decisive attack, even against the opinion of the High Command.

Now he fears that they may not realize the magnitude of the success and therefore fail to take full advantage of it. He only trusts Rommel. From Rome a restraining telegram has already been sent, advising that they should not venture beyond the line of Fort Capuzzo-Sollum.

There is, on the other hand, some hesitation about the Malta undertaking. Mussolini wrote to Hitler, saying that if we had not got forty thousand tons of oil at our disposal, we should have to postpone it indefinitely.

This morning Petacci's sister was married in Rome, and the event was talked about throughout the city. There was talk of rich and fantastic gifts, forests of flowers, and Lucullan banquets. Much of it is probably fantasy, but there is a great deal of talk and this is what counts. The Duce said to Pavolini: "While we are talking, a marriage is going on at Santa Maria degli Angeli. It is good from an economic point of view, but bad for the girl, who had prospects of a successful film career. I hope, at any rate, that the newspapers will have the sense not to talk about it. Only the *Messaggero*, for which her father writes, can make the announcement." It is interesting that Mussolini broached the question openly with a Minister.

JUNE 23, 1942. A second conference between Serrano and the Duce. Nothing very important except the affirmation by Serrano that if Portugal should be attacked by the Anglo-Saxons Spain would not hesitate to come into the war. In this connection there already exists an agreement between Franco and Salazar. From the Duce comes the striking statement that he, "like all Italians, is an Apostolic Roman Catholic, and that he does not believe that Rosenberg's<sup>320</sup> theory will be successful after the war".

From some intercepted telegrams from the American observer in Cairo, Fellers,<sup>321</sup> we learn that the British have been beaten and that if Rommel continues his action he has a good chance of getting as far as the Canal Zone. Naturally, Mussolini is pressing for prosecution of the attack.

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<sup>320</sup> Dr. Alfred Rosenberg: Nazi "philosopher and culture expert", in charge of war-time youth education. Reich Minister for Occupied European territory, 1941-4. Arrested in 1945, and tried at Nuremberg.

<sup>321</sup> Colonel (now General) B. F. Fellers: U.S. Military Attaché in Cairo.

Rommel's promotion to Marshal raises some problems of organization—in other words, the promotion of Bastico and Cavallero to the same rank. I have told the Duce what I think. "Bastico's promotion will make people laugh. Cavallero's will make them indignant." A proper shake-up has taken place over the clandestine traffic in gold with Spain through the diplomatic bag. I have confiscated eighteen kilos and given them to the police. The information came from Riccardi. The persons mixed up in it all belong to the Petacci gang. Buffarini also has a part in it. I make no further comment.

JUNE 24, 1942. The question of the gold and the Petaccis is becoming more acute. Riccardi talked about it to the Duce, to whom Buffarini had already tried to speak in self-defence. According to Riccardi, Mussolini is very indignant at what has happened and has given orders that the guilty be punished according to law, without respect for persons and without pity. According to Buffarini, on the other hand, the Duce was angry with Riccardi for having made a scene; the question should have been treated differently and with reserve. To complicate matters, the name of the notorious Dr. Petacci has been added. Dr. Petacci has come out of the shadow to address a violent letter to Buffarini, Riccardi, and the Duce, in which he lays claim to special merit—"Fascist and national merit"—for having gone in for such an operation, and insults all those who are trying to put obstacles in his way. The whole affair cannot end quietly. It will be interesting to see who will foot the bill.

In Libya, Rommel's action is progressing at full speed. The rosiest forecasts can now be made.

JUNE 25, 1942. After having made a tour of Air Force stations to award decorations, the Duce returned to Rome.

Victory has encouraged our forces in Libya and they are now preparing to besiege Mersa Matruh.

Serrano has left, after an eleven-day visit. A too lengthy visit is never useful; it creates boredom. Perhaps reciprocal, certainly unilateral.

JUNE 26, 1942. Mussolini is pleased over the progress of operations in Libya but angry that the battle is identified with Rommel, thus appearing more and more as a German rather

than an Italian victory. Also Rommel's promotion to Field Marshal, "which Hitler evidently made to accentuate the German character of the battle", causes the Duce much pain. Naturally, he takes it out on Graziani, "who has always been seventy feet underground in a Roman tomb at Cyrene, while Rommel knows how to lead his troops with the personal example of the general who lives in his tank". For the moment Mussolini does not make forecasts but hopes that "before fifteen days are over we can establish our commissariat in Alexandria". He paints the Russian situation in darker colours: Russia, "where the Bolsheviks have put into execution the tactics of Lenin, who instructed the proletariat to fight house by house against the armies of the bourgeois, thus forcing them to abandon their artillery and aircraft, and to use guns and bombs only". Our officers have prepared declarations of independence for Egypt, changes in government, etc. We shall talk about all this after Mersa Matruh has been taken.

I go to Leghorn on the anniversary of my father's death.

JUNE 27, 1942. At Leghorn for the ceremonies in memory of my father; my memory of him is increasingly keen and sacred.

JUNE 28, 1942. At Leghorn. Sea-shore and fishing. Operations in Libya are moving very fast. Mersa Matruh has fallen. The way to the Delta is now open.

JUNE 29, 1942. Mussolini has left for Libya. I see Riccardi, who gives me a long account of his conversation with the Duce on the Petacci gold affair. It seems that the Duce is very indignant and has ordered Dr. Petacci to abstain from any such dealings in the future. We shall see. I do not know whether Riccardi has, perhaps, exposed himself too much. He said something that impressed me: "While I was speaking to the Duce I had before me a humiliated man. We were no longer on the same plane. I was two steps higher up." With Mussolini, it is very dangerous to believe that one is two steps above him.

JUNE 30, 1942. I have had considerable difficulty in preventing Riccardi, for economic reasons, from creating a real political crisis with Switzerland, which I definitely want to avoid at this moment. I succeeded, but it was a burdensome and annoying discussion.

In Libya we are doing well, and our information gives the impression that the British are going through a grave crisis.

JULY 1, 1942. I leave for Leghorn, where I intend to spend a few days of rest at the sea-shore. News from Africa is still excellent.

JULY 2, 1942. Mussolini telegraphs, giving instructions to get in touch with the Germans about the question of the future political government of Egypt. Rommel is to be the military commander, and an Italian is to be civilian delegate. I am asked to suggest a name. I suggest Mazzolini, who was our last Minister at Cairo. Blasco d'Aieta speaks with von Mackensen. If I had seen the Duce I would have dissuaded him from making a move which sounds too much like putting the cart before the horse.

JULY 3, 1942. Hitler answers that he agrees so far as Rommel is concerned, but he is postponing his answer about the Italian delegate, also about German representation. At any rate, he does not consider the question "urgent". He is not wrong, because a sudden and not unforeseen British resistance compels us to mark time before El Alamein. At the G.H.Q. in Rome they are very optimistic, and convinced that the lull is altogether temporary.

JULY 4, 1942. Cavallero has been made a Marshal, evidently to offset the impression produced by the promotion of Rommel. The effect is negligible. The move is received with unanimous disfavour, especially in military circles.

JULY 5, 1942. Nothing new. We are still marking time in Libya. In Russia, on the other hand, the German offensive is moving slowly and with great difficulty. Either resistance has increased considerably or the force of penetration of the German Army is no longer what it was.

JULY 6, 1942. I have returned to Rome. There is a vague concern in the air because of the lull before El Alamein. It is feared that after the impact of the initial attack is spent Rommel cannot advance farther, and whoever stops in the desert is truly lost. It is enough to think that every drop of water must come from Mersa Matruh, over almost two hundred kilometres of road under bombardment by enemy aircraft. It is reported to me that in military circles there is violent in-

dignation against the Germans because of their behaviour in Libya. They have grabbed all the booty. They have thrust their claws everywhere, placed German guards over the booty, and woe to anyone who comes near. The only one who has succeeded in getting plenty for himself, naturally, is Cavallero, and he has sent the goods to Italy by plane. This information is correct. It was given to me by Colonel Casero, the head of the air bureau. There is no question about it, Cavallero may not be a great strategist, but when it is a question of grabbing, he can cheat even the Germans.

JULY 7, 1942. Francesco Coppola, who, despite his advanced age, faced the long journey to East Africa in order to find his daughter, has returned disconsolate and alone. His daughter has been detained in Somaliland and may come home by the next Red Cross ship if there is to be one. Coppola has given a very unbiased account of his trip. The Italians, after the British occupation, for the most part maintained a very praiseworthy attitude. They do not complain of the treatment they receive. In general, the British have been fair, so have the Abyssinians, especially in the large centres. It seems that the Negus has taken strong measures to protect the life and property of Italians, perhaps in the hope of establishing a future *modus vivendi* with us. The British, with whom Coppola had to deal during his journey, likewise behaved well. In general, they are not very enthusiastic about the war, and their morale is moderate.

Cavallero, who has left Libya for a brief visit, is extremely optimistic on the approaching resumption of operations. He is certain that the superiority of the Axis forces will bring us to Alexandria immediately and in a short time to Cairo and the Canal. Meanwhile, the Germans have agreed that the Civil Commissioner of Egypt should be an Italian, a question about which they had previously raised some objections.

JULY 8, 1942. I see Sebastiani, Mussolini's ex-secretary, whom I have not seen for some time. He is upset because a request for an audience was not granted by the Duce. He attributes his misfortune to the sinister influence of the Petaccis. Sebastiani is a reserved man, and for the first time he spoke to me about this matter. He believes that the Duce will find it



difficult to deal with the situation that has arisen. ("The girl is not bad, but the other members of the family are a band of brigands!") For some time he has been convinced of the necessity of breaking away. Once he said to Sebastiani: "This affair, too, will soon end." Pavolini thinks otherwise. He states that Mussolini took more interest in the marriage of the Petacci woman's sister than in the marriages of his own children. He even telephoned at midnight to learn the contents of the article in the society column of the *Messagero*.

JULY 9, 1942. Again at Leghorn for ten days. I have not had any political contacts except a visit from Admiral Riccardi, who outlined a plan to block the Sicilian passage, and one from Buffarini, who makes rather gloomy forecasts about the wheat harvest.

JULY 20, 1942. Back in Rome. Mussolini, too, will return during the evening. His return, combined with news from Libya, convinces the public that many rosy dreams about Egypt have faded, at least for the time being. We shall now see if our deployment before El Alamein is wise or not. Some people on the General Staff are considering the advisability of a retreat.

Tamara<sup>322</sup> sends news from Switzerland about Anglo-German conversations that are supposed to be taking place at Lugano. He supplies a wealth of details. On behalf of the Germans, those present are said to be Seyss-Inquart, Rintelen, et al.; representing the British, personages of more or less equivalent rank. Tamara enclosed some snapshots, but I honestly did not recognize anyone. How much truth is there in it? It is difficult to say. Nevertheless, it all has a strong flavour of the cheap novel. But it is best to keep our eyes open. One never knows.

JULY 21, 1942. The Duce is in good humour, especially as he is satisfied that in the space of two or three weeks we can resume our forward march in Egypt and reach the great goals of the Delta and the Canal. He is so certain of it that he has left his personal baggage in Libya as guarantee of a quick return. (Bismarck, on the other hand, in view of information from General Rintelen, considers that our offensive is postponed for

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<sup>322</sup> Attilio Tamara: Italian Minister to Switzerland.

a long time, because the exhaustion of our troops has been very considerable, and because the reinforcements that have reached the British are greater than could have been foreseen.)

Naturally, Mussolini has been absorbing the anti-Rommel talk of the Italian commander in Libya, and he takes it out on the German Marshal who, by the way, did not pay him a visit during the three weeks and more Mussolini spent there. The attitude of the soldiers is also insolent. German motor vehicles do not yield the right of way to anyone, even to our generals, and at the slightest opportunity of acquiring a little booty they take everything. The Arabs behave very badly. "The Balbo policy failed completely, and the only good thing he did was to build Balbia." He told me that he had found groups of fierce-looking New Zealand prisoners "who were so far from reassuring that he always kept his gun close at hand". He said little about Russia, but he is convinced that for the time being operations are far from decisive.

JULY 22, 1942. Mussolini has written a letter to Hitler: an account of his stay in Libya and his visit to Athens. In reality, the main purpose of the letter was to straighten things out on the matter of our Sabratha Division, because Rommel had sent a telegram to Germany speaking ill of it—a telegram which "Mussolini will never forgive him". The tone of Mussolini's letter did not please my office colleagues. There were too many bureaucratic expressions, such as "I have the honour of transmitting to you", "I permit myself to call your attention to", which gave to the writing, according to them, the character of a report by a subordinate to his superior. Mussolini is now irritated at the Germans. He deprecates their systematic impoverishment of Greece, and when I called them "Lanzi"<sup>323</sup> he, who usually does not like my phraseology, agreed with enthusiasm, adding: "Perhaps many Germans deplore the fact that they did not invade Italy, in order to take everything away with them. But had they done so, they would have lost the war."

Mackensen pays me a visit on some pretext or other. He eulogizes Cavallero, "who, in addition to technical competence, has also a great political instinct and is a real friend of Ger-

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<sup>323</sup> "Lanzi", a disparaging term generally used by Italians from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century to describe brutish armed forces of German origin.

many". Friend? No, a servant. Mackensen doesn't believe that the offensive can be resumed before October, and makes many reservations. De Cesare also said the same thing. This concerns me more because De Cesare has the evil eye. During a trip to Libya his spell worked well: four of the Duce's followers dead in a plane accident.

JULY 23, 1942. I recounted the forecasts of the German Ambassador to the Duce. After two days of pretended assurance Mussolini has thrown off his mask and has spoken clearly. He is furious with the military, who "for the second time have made a fool of him by making him visit the front at an unfavourable stage". (Of course he is alluding to his trip to Albania.) This time he had given orders to Cavallero to send, by telegram, en clair the word "Tevere" when Cavallero was certain about the advance of our troops up to the Canal. The password "Tevere" arrived on Friday, June 27th. The Duce had to delay his departure two days because of a cyclone. Only when he was on the spot did he realize that things were not going well, and that even "Rommel's strategy had its ups and downs". The promotion of Cavallero to Field Marshal could not be avoided because he found himself "between Rommel and Kesselring like Christ between the thieves". In any case, Bastico will also be nominated Field Marshal, and after him other generals, not excluding even Navarra, his doorkeeper. Forecasts are now very reserved; in Mussolini's opinion we must avoid any retreat or we cannot know where we shall end.

JULY 24, 1942. The tone of the Duce's speeches is increasingly anti-German. To-day he gave vent to his feelings on two points: a statement by General Marras on the meagre esteem in which our military contribution is held by the German General Staff, and the lack of understanding of our needs and of our industrial aspirations. "The people," Mussolini said, "are now wondering which of the two masters is to be preferred, the English or the Germans." I reminded him of what François-Poncet said upon leaving my room on the day of the declaration of war: "*Ne creusez pas des fosses trop profonds; n'oubliez pas que les allemands sont des maîtres durs.*"

The Germans have occupied Rostov. It is reported from many sources that the opening of a second front in France by

the British and Americans is certain. In Berlin, from what Alfieri telegraphs, the matter is not causing concern, but annoyance.

JULY 25, 1942. Nothing new. The Duce is leaving for Riccione.

JULY 26, 1942. The Mufti<sup>324</sup> makes loud accusations against El Gailani. As was to be foreseen, the two quarrelled, and Grobba added fuel to the fire. He is the head of the Arab Service of the German Foreign Office. The incident has special importance if negotiations in Egypt are to be resumed favourably.

JULY, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 1942. In Leghorn.

AUGUST 1, 1942. Buffarini was called to Riccione by Mussolini because the situation in Sicily gives much concern; the peasants are refusing to hand over their grain, and in many cases they fired on those charged with collecting it. On the basis of reports from the Health Service Buffarini called Mussolini's attention to the fact that in the working class eczema caused by malnutrition is appearing. Even at Piombino, according to Aiello,<sup>325</sup> similar cases are occurring.

Bottai pays me a visit. He has nothing to tell me, but he is more anti-Mussolini than ever. If he talks this way to me, imagine what he must say among his own friends!

AUGUST, 2, 1942. We are warned from Lisbon that before long the Royal Air Force will bomb Milan in grand style. I don't know whether this will happen, but it is likely, and, in a certain sense, quite logical. I inform Buffarini.

Edda attacked me violently, accusing me of hating the Germans, saying that my hatred for the Germans is known everywhere, especially among the Germans themselves, who are saying that "they are physically repulsive to me". I cannot understand why Edda should be so excited about it, nor who talked about it to her. Generally when she behaves in this way she has been influenced by somebody. I said little or nothing in reply. After all, she knows very well how I feel on the matter. And I am not the only one. . . .

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<sup>324</sup> Haj Amin el-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem: Exiled from Palestine during the war, which he spent in Germany and Italy. Was deported to France in 1945, and escaped in June, 1946, to Cairo, where he was given refuge by King Farouk.

<sup>325</sup> Aiello: A provincial secretary of the Fascist Party.

AUGUST 3, 1942. Nothing new.

AUGUST 4, 1942. Ambrosio,<sup>326</sup> of the General Staff, tells me: (1) in Libya we shall not be able to resume troop movements until the end of October; however, the prospects are good because British reinforcements are slower than had been foreseen, while our reinforcements, especially the Germans (and this concerns the General Staff for obvious reasons), are arriving regularly; (2) operations in Russia are developing well, and it is foreseen that German operations against the Caucasus will continue even during the winter; (3) personally, he does not believe in a victory that will destroy our enemies. However, he thinks that Russia will probably be detached from the Allied camp, after which Great Britain and America will be obliged to come to terms. This, in summary, is the military-political thought of our General Staff to-day.

Lombrassa foresees a strong accentuation of the labour shortage, and this is why the mobilization of civilians will shortly begin on a large scale. I have advised him to remove that odious flavour of punishment from forced civilian service which has so far been attached to it. The citizen should know that civilian service is on the same moral plane as military service. Hence, we must do away with contemptible gossip, referring to such citizens as being pederasts and card-sharpers, such people as we are in the habit of sending to the Carbonia lignite mines in Sardinia. It is not becoming.

AUGUST 5, 1942. A letter arrives from Hitler for the Duce. I send it unopened to Riccione.

AUGUST 6, 1942. There is great optimism about future possibilities in Libya according to General Marchesi, commander of the air squadrons. Rommel is preparing to attack, and undoubtedly he should settle matters within ten days. Objectives: Cairo, Alexandria, Suez. The action to begin between the 20th and 26th of this month.

A less rosy picture is painted for me by Renato Ricci. He talks about the industrial and food situations as they will be

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<sup>326</sup> General Vittorio Ambrosio: Leading Fascist. Succeeded Cavallero as Chief of the General Staff in 1943. Dismissed by Mussolini. Commander-in-Chief after coup-d'état, 1943.

during the coming winter. He predicts that we shall have to pull in our belts; but nothing compared to last winter.

Arpinati asks a favour for some of his friends. He describes the situation in Romagna as awkward, attributing this in large measure to the fact that too many women of the Mussolini family are poking their noses into the local situation. To these is now added the Petacci woman, who, in Rimini, where she is staying for the baths, hands down judgments, orders people about, and is given to intrigues. Her spokesman and agent is a certain Spisani, a third-rate dancing teacher. Comic anecdotes are told. It appears that the Petacci recently went to Budapest, and this sounds likely, because she is trying to get a divorce.<sup>327</sup> To someone who asked her about her visit, she replied: "I had neither receptions nor parties. I went there absolutely incognito."

AUGUST 7, 1942. At Forlì to attend the placing of Bruno's remains in a vault. On the train I spoke with Vidussoni. Besides being rather unintelligent, he shows a brazen ignorance. He spoke "of the history of Fascism by Orianì", but meant Orano. But for him it is all the same. He said that he did not know who "De Chirico was, because for two years he had been too occupied to read modern writers". What is pitiful is that he no longer holds his tongue; he talks too much and insists on having his say.

Mussolini desired that the ceremony in the cemetery of San Cassiano be altogether a family affair. There were eight of us in the crypt—his closest relatives and the widow. There was a good deal of sadness, a sort of catacomb air, and three tombs of grey stone—for Mussolini's parents and his son. On Bruno's tomb sadness is accentuated by a painting of him, gay and smiling. The mass was brief, and performed by a priest who drew out the Latin *s*'s like those of his Romagnolo dialect. The Duce was apparently impassive but inwardly tormented. After the ceremony he kissed Bruno's tomb, and, indicating the empty space between Bruno and the altar, said a number of times that that was to be his own place. We then went to Rocca and to Carpena. Mussolini wanted to visit the scenes of Bruno's

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<sup>327</sup> As there is no divorce law in Italy some Italians applied to the courts in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

childhood. He was angry because the members of his family had accepted a basket of foodstuffs from the peasants. "I do not intend to return from the tomb of my son with chickens and pears," he commented. He was right.

AUGUST 8, 1942. Mussolini is back in Rome. I had a long conversation with him to discuss certain matters which had been waiting during his absence. Generally speaking, Hitler's letter was of no great importance, and with regard to Greece he avoids any and all commitments. It is the food situation which concerns the Duce. Not at this moment, since vegetables and fruit afford a temporary well-being, but for the morrow, for the winter when everything will be scarce and perhaps it will not be possible to increase the bread ration. There are cases of malnutrition in some provinces. It isn't too pervasive a phenomenon, but it is ugly. Mussolini thinks about it more than he talks about it, and more than he would have others believe. His stomach pains have returned; the old ulcer has come to life again. This means that he is worrying.

Pareschi, who is usually optimistic, is far from being encouraging at present. He would like to get foodstuffs from abroad. But it is useless. I believe that this year we shall receive very little, perhaps nothing. There will also be suffering because of the cold. There is no coal, and wood will be rationed.

Alfieri made a useless trip to the Russian Front, where he saw Hitler. He learned nothing concrete, and for this reason he chatters a lot. Mussolini, too, thinks that Alfieri has come to the end of his usefulness; maybe not to-day, but in any case I must have his successor ready.

AUGUST 9, 1942. Nothing new.

AUGUST 10, 1942. News of the day: The taking of Maikop by the Germans and agitation in India. Mussolini attributes a great deal of importance to both facts. The first will have the effect of relieving the Axis, but not immediately; and not altogether, of the pressing oil problem. The second could, in the Duce's judgment, precipitate an Asiatic crisis. If Japan should decide to march on India, great and surprising developments might be expected. But will Japan do it? From here it is not possible to prophesy, considering the fact that

China, according to what Taliani<sup>328</sup> telegraphs to-day, is more than ever united against Japan; and even Wang Ching-wei, the Laval of Nanking, has given up trying to bring about a rapprochement between the two peoples. In my opinion, the struggle between China and Japan will be eternal. There will be lulls, it will have vicissitudes favouring first one side and then the other, but it will never quieten down. More than a political fact, it is a biological fact, and biologically China is very strong.

AUGUST 11, 1942. Meeting of the Council of Ministers. The measures considered had to do with ordinary administration, but they none the less gave Mussolini a chance to make certain interesting statements about his visit to Libya, on the fall of the Empire, and on the progress of the war. He was more optimistic than ever in his forecast for the future: the war has already been won because the Anglo-Saxons, having divided their forces between so many fronts, cannot seriously engage in any offensive action.

Grandi commented with pessimism on the Duce's statements. Grandi is very much disturbed about the internal situation and said that for the first time in twenty years he has asked for police protection at his villa. He exaggerates. He detests Cavallero. "That rascal," he said, "is preparing himself to become the Italian Pétain and would like to kill us all. But we shall get rid of him first."

A great British convoy, well escorted, is proceeding from Gibraltar eastwards. Our air and naval forces have already taken up their positions. To-morrow will be a hard-fought day.

AUGUST 12, 1942. The aero-naval battle is in progress. For the time being details are lacking. Fougier and Casero are not too well pleased. The Germans have announced the sinking of the English aircraft carrier *Eagle*, but there is considerable doubt about this. By to-morrow at dawn a naval engagement is expected. However, we are in an inferior position. The big ships cannot move from port because of petrol shortage and lack of light escort craft.

AUGUST 13, 1942. All attention is concentrated on the battle in the Mediterranean. It would seem that things are

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<sup>328</sup> Taliani: Italian Ambassador to China.



developing rather well for us, but the loss of *Bolzano* and damage suffered by *Attendolo* was a high price. At the moment only four ships of the convoy have reached Malta. Mussolini is moderately satisfied with the results, "because the guns of the Navy were not engaged in the battle".

AUGUST 14, 1942. No news.

AUGUST 15, 1942. The Roman midsummer holiday; the city is empty as usual. It seems that this morning at the railway stations, as the trains were leaving, there was conduct worthy of barbarians. The people do not wish to change their habits, if they can get away with it, and everybody wants to have a good time. The war? They want to forget it.

A long conversation with Buti, who, according to his nature, delivers what he has to say in mouthfuls and morsels, saying nothing that commits him too much, and full of reticence. This is more or less what he thinks: French hatred is growing by leaps and bounds against the Germans, not against us. But nothing will happen; they will not go beyond their present demonstrations: shootings, sabotage, nothing more. The Government believes in a victory of the Axis; the people believe in a victory of the Allies. De Gaulle, as a person, is despised by everybody, but at heart the country is de Gaullist. The blow has been heavy for the French, and this is more evident in the general situation than it is in individuals. The French have remained what they were before: same habits, same ideas, same prejudices. They cannot say why, but they are convinced that in the future they will still have a great deal to say. Naturally they look more towards Moscow and Washington than towards London. "The feeling of the French with regard to the British is identical with that of the Italians with regard to the Germans." For once he couldn't have been more explicit.

AUGUST 16, 1942. Resistance on the Russian Front seems to stiffen. In any event, there are no indications of a possible or imminent collapse. From a Turkish telegram, intercepted by our services, it would seem that the standard of life in Russia is quite good and the spirit of the people hopeful. "Emaciated faces," telegraphs Zobune,<sup>329</sup> "I have seen only

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<sup>329</sup> Zobune: Turkish Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

in Vienna and Munich. In Kuibyshev everybody lives well and eats very abundantly." He relates that the real enemy of the diplomatic set is boredom, and that in order to defeat it everybody has resorted to drink with great determination. I must say that I have seen many of my colleagues get drunk even without excuse.

A discussion between Giannini and Clodius about the maintenance of food supplies to our Expeditionary Corps in Russia. The Germans want to put it entirely on our shoulders, contrary to the agreements made. Giannini resisted strongly, but now the German Embassy in Rome has brought the matter up and we shall see what Mussolini will decide.

Bulgarian frontier break-through into Albania. It appears that the Germans are behind this; they have their eyes on the mines of Jezerina.

I am dissatisfied with, and now believe that I shall recall, Tamaro, Minister in Switzerland. He has got himself involved in a policy which is unsympathetic to the Swiss and I believe that it is to our interests, present and future, to be friendly with Switzerland.

AUGUST 17, 1942. In Leghorn.

AUGUST 25, 1942. I leave Leghorn for Budapest, for the funeral of Stephen Horthy, who was killed in an aeroplane accident.

AUGUST 26, 1942. I arrive in Budapest. The city is in mourning and very sad. From the windows and from the archways long black streamers are hanging, which contrast with the enamel blue of the sky. The Regent is the first person I see. Our meeting at the gateway is casual. He is very much upset, and leaves at once. Later he receives me in his study. He speaks with relative calm, and would like to discuss general politics. But he is still upset by his sorrow for the loss of his son, and is thinking of the succession. The death of Stephen to-day seems to indicate the collapse of what he has accomplished so far. He has no clear ideas, but from various hints I take it that he is thinking of arranging for his son's son, who is a baby one year old, to succeed him. Nonsense. Everybody in Hungary, even those who were favourable to the vice-regency of Stephen Horthy, are very much opposed to a solution that would tie the hands of the Magyar people for a period of twenty or thirty

years. Kallay himself tells me this, and in Hungarian politics he is a strong follower of the Regent.

I have drawn up a statement on the conference with Kanya. It has been suggested that a solution would be to have Victor Emmanuel III become the nominal sovereign of both countries. I have noted in another place my remarks and objections. I believe the idea is impossible, or at least very premature.

AUGUST 27, 1942. Hungarian ceremonial funerals have a certain oriental and imposing quality. Much commotion and many tears, but more pity for the mother than grief for the loss of Stephen Horthy.

Long conversations with Ribbentrop. His courtesy is really unusual. He comes to see me first, invites me to lunch, steps aside at every doorway, even though with the Hungarians he wants to make it clear that he occupies first place, contrary to every right and tradition. (The Hungarians, who hate the Germans but who tremble in their presence, try to please him by suggesting that precedence be determined according to the French alphabetical order of nations: Allemagne, Italie, etc. Much ado about nothing!)

Ribbentrop's tone is moderate, even though he continues to be optimistic. The German: "The war is already won" of the old days has now become: "We cannot lose this war." He is obviously coming off his high horse. He gave no particulars, but he judges Russia to be a hard nut, very hard, and thinks that not even if Japan should attack her would she be entirely knocked out. He makes no forecasts on the length of the war; it might have a rapid conclusion, "but one must not count too much on that".

He repeated his invitation for the usual shooting party at Schönhof towards the end of October.

AUGUST 28, 1942. In Venice. A visit to the biennial exhibition. Paintings and sculpture are very interesting. In general, the Spanish pavilion is the best. We had two painters who are important: De Chirico and Sciltian.

AUGUST 29, 1942. I report to Mussolini on my visit to Budapest and give him my notes on the meeting with Kanya. Total indifference. The principal reason for this is concern over the Germans. He is certain—and he is right—that Hitler, even

if he were to accept such a thing as the joint monarchy, would make us pay dearly for it as soon as possible. The second element has to do with Mussolini's growing hostility towards monarchies and towards our own monarchy. Mussolini said: "I entertained a similar idea in regard to the Duke of Aosta, but with him dead nothing else of that kind will be done."

With the approval of the Duce, Grandi had arranged for a visit to Spain. Now I have received instructions to tell him to abandon the visit. Grandi grasped the idea and has postponed the visit without objection.

AUGUST 30, 1942. Ghigi sends an S.O.S. from Greece. The Germans are insisting on astronomical indemnities, the Government threatens to resign, trouble may begin at any minute. In any case, I advise Mussolini not to take any initiative. He had promised the Greeks to plead for them with Hitler, and wrote him a letter, but Hitler refused. One cannot fail twice without losing too much prestige. This argument of mine led Mussolini to expatiate on an article which appeared in a German review. The New Order is here described in detail, also what will be the role of all peoples, including the allies of Germany. No liberty, no rights, except that of serving the nation "which will be at the head". I telegraphed Alfieri to learn whether the ideas in the article reflected those of the governing classes in Germany. I think that even if the answer is no it means yes.

AUGUST 31, 1942. Yesterday evening at eight o'clock Rommel attacked in Libya. He has chosen the day and the hour well, at a time when no one was expecting the attack and whisky had begun to appear on the English tables. Mussolini expresses no opinion, but is substantially optimistic. Cavallero, who had shown no signs of life for a long time, telephones to give me news of the operation. As usual he wavers between "yes" and "no". He does not wish to compromise himself, but intends to remain sufficiently near to gather the fruits of victory, if there are any. Churchill, according to what the Turkish Ambassador has telegraphed to his Government, has said that if Rommel had not attacked in two weeks he would have taken the initiative in the operations. He believes that the British forces are sufficient

for any eventuality, but wishes to adopt a phrase used by Stalin: "Anything is possible, since war is war."

SEPTEMBER 1, 1942. There is no great news. In Egypt the British are withdrawing towards the sea, offering a minimum of resistance. Mussolini believes that they want to resist on the coast, where they can have the support of naval forces.

Jacomoni makes rather a reassuring report on the Albanian situation. It suffices to be assured of a minimum of foodstuffs to maintain order in the country, notwithstanding the fact that enemy propaganda is now aiming at Albania, which represents the only oasis of peace in all the Balkans. From documents that have come into possession of the Government it seems that the British are attempting to start uprisings and disorders in order to be able, when peace comes, to compromise those who have been in favour of union with Italy, and to destroy any legal basis to the relations between the Albanians and us.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1942. Rommel is halted in Egypt because of lack of fuel. Three of our oil tankers have been sunk in two days. Cavallero maintains that this will not change the course of operations, and that other means will be found to forward the petrol. Instead of the oil tankers, which are too easily identified, ordinary boats and hospital ships can be used. (This is an old system that goes well as long as it goes well.) Nevertheless, Cavallero repeats that Rommel's push is destined to reach the Canal this time.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1942. Rommel's pause continues, and, what is worse, the sinking of our ships continues. To-night there have been two. Cavallero repeats his optimistic declarations, and says that within a week the march will be resumed. Rintelen, who has just arrived from Libya to-day, is less sure. Everything, not only fuel, is lacking. Hence, action this time is, according to him, a little risky, and may turn out well or badly. Mussolini is in a black mood. He does not express himself; in fact, he has been silent on the subject of Egypt for three days. Once more he suffers from stomach pains. Yesterday he had himself examined by a radiologist. There was nothing serious the matter with him, except gastritis, but it is painful and debilitating. To-day, while he was conferring with Jacomoni and me on the Albanian situation, he was unable to hide his

suffering. Yesterday the Duce sent a telegram to the industrial workers. He praised them and violently threatened other greedy, odious, and egotistical groups. Everybody thought that he was aiming at the middle class, as usual, but, on the contrary, he was striking at the farmers, who, "after the regime has favoured them for twenty years, take everything and are greedy for money to the point of deserving the worst punishment, the infliction of which would, after all, result in nothing but benefit to the State. Nevertheless, this year no one will die of hunger, and if many Italians have to grow lean, it will do them good."

SEPTEMBER 4, 1942. What is happening in Libya is not clear. Rommel is drawing back his left flank under the attack of the British Air Force even before the enemy tanks come into action. To-night two other ships were sunk. Our supply problem is difficult. Rintelen maintains that the offensive should be postponed indefinitely. Casero is of the same opinion.

A Government crisis in Spain. It had grown to be inevitable. I was convinced of this in Leghorn when I heard how Serrano was talking about Franco. He talked of him as one speaks of a moronic servant. And he said this without caution, in front of anybody. It is too early to say what the consequences of this development will be. The only indication might be the choice of Jordana, and this would not be favourable. Jordana has always been a sympathizer with France and Great Britain, not whole-heartedly with the Axis. On the other hand, lately, many events prove that the Iberian Peninsula is beginning to entertain doubts as to the future, and wishes to remain on friendly terms with everybody. Maybe Serrano will come to Rome. I am not enthusiastic about the idea, because Serrano is an intriguer and a gossip, and may be the cause of great embarrassment. We must be extremely careful about him.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1942. Three days with influenza.

SEPTEMBER 6, 1942. Nothing.

SEPTEMBER 9, 1942. I call Mussolini's attention to the Albanian situation. More of the inevitable undercurrent of discontent. I am concerned about our lack of troops. There are four divisions, but in name only; in reality, eleven thousand men. Under the circumstances, any surprise is possible. Cavallero, to whom I communicated my alarm, could do

nothing more than give me fifty tanks; not enough. The Duce lets off one of his periodic attacks on the Army, with which everything is going badly and nothing is improving. He talks also of operations in Libya. The idea of an offensive is now given up, at least for some time. Let us hope that the enemy will not take too much advantage of it. Then, too, he is angry with Rommel, who, according to British sources, has telegraphed accusing several of our officers of having revealed some of his future plans to the enemy. As always, victory finds a hundred fathers, but defeat is an orphan. Now in Libya they are quarrelling, and Kesselring ran to Berlin to complain about Rommel. They are talking about a possible recall of Rommel.

Gambara emerged unscathed from the investigation directed against him. He will have another command. I am glad about it, because he is a patriotic Italian and a soldier, and for these very reasons they were trying to stab him in the back.

Churchill has spoken after a long silence. It is an unruffled speech, and substantially optimistic.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1942. I accompany the secretary of the Albanian National Party to see the Duce.

Casero reports on aircraft production as regards ourselves, the Germans, and the Allies. The proportions are changing every day to our disadvantage and on a large scale.

SEPTEMBER 11, 1942. I leave for Leghorn, where I will stay until the 23rd of September.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1942. This is what happened during my stay in Leghorn.

Fougier describes our aeroplane production in dark colours. Germany and Italy produce less than one fifth or one sixth of what the Allies produce. The enlistment of pilots is also inadequate and falling off. During the summer of 1943 the Allies will definitely have control of the skies.

D'Aieta reports to me a very confidential conversation with Bismarck, who is sure now that Germany will be defeated but will go on to the "bitter end". Italy will find a way out; and the well balanced policy that I have always maintained towards Britain and America may contribute to this end. It is because of this policy that Ribbentrop especially, and the Germans in general, hate me. If "they should win the war, my head would

be the first one they would want". There are also many Italians who denounce me to the German Embassy as pro-British. Mackensen reports on everything, but he comments on me in a friendly way.

Bottai stayed with me two days. He also is hopeful for the future. According to his nature, he indulges in useless re-creation. He says that the war is illegal, because the Grand Council was not consulted. He is, as always, hostile to Mussolini. He calls him "a self-taught man who had a bad teacher, and who was a worse student".

SEPTEMBER 23, 1942. I find nothing new in Rome. On this first day I have no conversations of any importance. I talk with Mackensen about organizing certain celebrations for the Tripartite Pact. Ribbentrop misses no occasion to exalt this beloved child of his.

Guariglia says nothing new about Myron Taylor's trip. It is clear, at any rate, that at the Vatican they keep us informed only about what they want us to know. The only interesting thing is that the Germans have asked the Pope to intervene to stop the bombardment of German open cities. The word "Coventrize" was coined in Germany, as I recall.

SEPTEMBER 24, 1942. The lull on the two fronts has undoubtedly made a bad impression on public opinion. For the first time people are no longer asking themselves about the length of the war, but about its progress. That is how people with whom I have had occasion to talk express themselves.

A brief conversation with Arpinati, who recommends to me an employee of the Office of Corporations. Arpinati makes little mention of the general situation, and what he says is not interesting. The few conversations I have had with him give me the impression that this man has a very mediocre mind. They say that he is an honest man. This may be true, but that is all there is to him.

Albini is sceptical on the Neapolitan situation. There is much misery, a great deal of hunger, and concern that bombings on a large scale will begin again.

Ricci wants me to concern myself a little more with the internal situation, which, according to him, is at its lowest. But on what authority could I meddle with it?



SEPTEMBER 25, 1942. I had a few more conversations, and all those with whom I spoke were depressed. Morgagni, who is anything but a friend of mine, was more explicit than the others. Things are not going well at the front, and very badly inside the country. What, then, will the future bring? I confined myself to replying that while I was always prudent when others were optimistic, I am calm and serene when others are in despair. I don't know how, nor can I say why, but I am certain that things cannot go completely wrong with us. Bastianini also sees black. But this is habitual with him, and I don't remember ever having had a conversation with him in which he didn't make dark forecasts. He isn't a great intellect and doesn't see very far ahead; what he sees is always damnably dark.

The most pessimistic report which has lately come to us from Germany is from young Farinacci. What would his father think?

From Berlin through Alfieri, who approves of it, comes the proposal that we give Myron Taylor a "solemn booting". How foolish! I can't say whether it is more ridiculous or disgusting. It would appear that the inventor of this idea was that cripple Goebbels. It doesn't even deserve an answer.

SEPTEMBER 26, 1942. I receive a letter from Edda, which disturbs me a great deal. I attach it to this page. Tomorrow I shall see Donna Rachele and will see what can possibly be done. Under the circumstances, for the Duce to be ill would be really disastrous.

Alfieri telegraphs that the German Chief of Staff, Halder,<sup>330</sup> has been dismissed. Halder is a big figure in the German military world. An ugly sign.

(Letter from Edda Ciano to her husband, attached to diary.)

"DEAR GALLO: I arrived last evening at eleven, after a terrible journey. I was told, with that idiotic inconsistency which makes mine the most impossible of families, that they were all leaving to-day, but that if I wanted to remain I could. . . . My mother has no sense of humour. She says and does the most fantastic things. . . . Anyway, this is not why I am writing you. My father is not well. Stomach pains,

<sup>330</sup> General Ritter Franz von Halder: Chief of Staff of German Army, 1938-42. Dismissed. Reported attempted suicide, 1944. Captured by the Allies, 1945.

irritability, depression, etc. My mother draws a rather dark picture. In my opinion it's the old ulcer again. (His private life of the last few years gives us much to think about, its effects, etc. . . . Well, let's not talk about it.) They made X-ray pictures of every kind—all negative—but a doctor was never called. When, having called for Frugoni,<sup>331</sup> they learned that he would not be in Rome until the 4th, they gave it up and . . . let it all slide! I have known few such scatter-brained people. Please will you do something yourself. If it isn't Frugoni, then let it be Pontano; if not him, then somebody else, anything so that my father is seen and examined and examined properly. Communicate with my mother and help her. So far the only measures taken have been blasphemy and curses. In an illness, a clinic is to be preferred, though, naturally, with a certain secrecy. Though it was a beautiful day, I had a sense of suffocation and fear. Maybe because I am so tired that I feel as if I were poisoned. To-night I haven't slept a wink, because, as the song says: 'All through the night in vain, with candle in hand, I hunted the ugly beast.' On my unprotected bed hundreds of mosquitoes charged forth. That's Capri for you. Some time to-day I shall leave for Castrocaro, where I hope to sleep. The children, as you will see, are well. The governess has been given her instructions. Hurray for Colonel Oliva! Dear Gallo, let's stand up to this! I urge you to get to work about the doctors, etc. I embrace you affectionately.

"EDDA."

SEPTEMBER 27, 1942. I see the Duce again, after a long absence. I find him thinner but sturdy, and his appearance seems in no way to confirm Edda's troubled impression. He is, as always, calm, but he realizes that military events have cut deeply into the morale of the population, especially the Stalin-grad resistance, which makes clear to the minds of the masses the great attachment of the Russian people to their regime proved by their exceptional resistance and spirit of sacrifice. I have had a visit from Rommel, who said that he is taking six weeks' leave. Mussolini is convinced that Rommel will not

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<sup>331</sup> Professor Cesare Frugoni: Leading Italian physician.

come back. He finds Rommel physically and morally shaken. I didn't conceal from the Duce my estimate of the situation, synthesizing it in the following formula: "Our state of mind at the beginning of the winter is what, on the worst showing, we might have expected at the end."

An Axis dinner. A rather heavy atmosphere. The only thing of note was Cavallero's gaffe when, to endear himself to the Japanese Ambassador, he gave him news of successes at Stalingrad. But the combination of Cavallero's and Horichiri's English made it come out that Stalingrad had fallen. The rumour spread through the hall, until the Germans, to Cavallero's great shame, took measures to deny it. Bottai heard the Japanese general offer the German assistant military attaché his congratulations for the victory. The German, in his hard Italian, said dryly and in a military style: "Nonsense."

SEPTEMBER 28, 1942. Nothing new.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1942. Host Venturi is concerned about the many sinkings in our merchant fleet. Replacements are slow and completely inadequate. In all, we have little more than a million tons left. At this rate the African problem will automatically end in six months, since we shall have no more ships with which to supply Libya. Venturi will give me a documented report in a few days.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1942. From Berlin and Vienna come very pessimistic reports. Even Alfieri, as is his nature, with many perhapses and buts, says that things are not going well, and that the summer offensive has failed to accomplish its purpose. Air bombings are terrorizing the German population, frequently paralysing all life.

D'Agostino, Director of the Bank of Labour, will go to Switzerland soon. I charge him with many good-will messages to his banker friends. I believe in Switzerland's future role and am convinced that we must cultivate Swiss friendship.

OCTOBER 1, 1942. Hitler has spoken. How much he's changed. Last year, at about this time, he made an address that was a pæan of victory. Now, at best, it may be said that he has made a defensive address. As usual on such an occasion, Alfieri is silent.

A very realistic note on the food situation was brought me

to-day by Pareschi. Winter will be harder than expected, and if the Germans do not really give us a hand we do not know where to go to obtain an adequate food supply.

OCTOBER 2, 1942. No new event of importance, but both from within and without pessimistic reports continue to reach us. From without, it is especially our consuls in Germany and our Balkan legations that give us discouraging news. From within, almost everybody does so. To-day, for example, I have seen Federzoni and Del Croix. Both have just arrived here after their leave. Well, they spoke as if they had had some previous understanding—the same observations, the same forecast, and identical regrets.

OCTOBER 3, 1942. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 4, 1942. Castellani sends me the results of the diagnosis that he made of the Duce. Naturally in this case, too, Castellani<sup>332</sup> has discovered his usual amoeba. For my own part, I believe he invented it. Nevertheless, Mussolini, although he feels some slight pain, looks well, and his capacity for work is undiminished.

Otherwise there is nothing new.

OCTOBER 5, 1942. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 6, 1942. Clodius is in Rome to discuss the Greek financial question, which is becoming more and more thorny. If it continues at this rate sensational and unavoidable inflation will result, with all its consequences. Ghigi foresees that the situation will be very bad. The amount of Greek money in circulation is one hundred and sixty billions.

Before the war it was nine billions. The Greeks are required to supply fifty-three billions a month. All this is absurd, but the German Army does not intend to reduce its demands. Clodius agrees with us, but cannot do anything about it. He will return to Berlin to confer with his superiors. He makes no comment on the general situation, but says only that by the end of October the cycle of summer operations may be considered at an end, and that this year the Russian Front will cause "much less anxiety than last winter".

OCTOBER 7, 1942. Dr. Kesterer, the man whom

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<sup>332</sup> Aldo Castellani, Count of Kisymaio: Senator; great authority on tropical medicine. Arrested and tried in 1945.

Himmler calls the magic Buddha, and who cures everything by means of massage, told me to-day that Himmler and von Ribbentrop are at daggers drawn, but that the first is powerful and the second will be disposed of because he is "insane and ill". Hitler hardly ever receives him. This must be true in part, because von Ribbentrop energetically opposed Himmler's coming to Italy, and even now is maintaining that the programme of the visit should be reduced to essentials.

Mussolini is disturbed over the gossip about the arrival of Myron Taylor in Rome. All this gossip is without importance and without foundation, because we know nothing as to what he has said and done. But all this talk is provoking and I am certain that in future it will make any further visits to the Vatican by Anglo-Saxon personages more difficult.

OCTOBER 8, 1942. Mussolini is very much disturbed by the attitude of the Germans in the occupied countries, especially in Greece. The claims that have been advanced are simply absurd. This means that the Germans are trying to create disorders and complications at all costs. The Duce said: "I have no qualms about the military course of the war. There will be neither surprises nor second fronts, but if we lose the war it will be because of the political stupidity of the Germans, who have not even tried to use good sense and restraint, and who have made Europe as hot and treacherous as a volcano." He is thinking of speaking to Himmler about this next Sunday, but he will not get much satisfaction.

I receive Count Capodistria, the Mayor of Corfu. He is a serious, restrained, and distinguished old man, and expresses himself in excellent Italian. He declares that the Ionian populations would like to have some administrative freedom, but that they do not at all want to return to the odious Hellenic government, and prefer to link their destinies to those of Italy. A plebiscite on this matter to-day would give almost unanimous results. Parini's work has been highly praised and he really deserves it.

OCTOBER 9, 1942. A long conference with General Amè, head of the Military Intelligence Service, who was distinctly pessimistic. All the information and the conversations lead one to conclude that the Anglo-Saxons are preparing to

land in force in North Africa, whence, later on, they intend to launch their blows against the Axis. Italy is geographically and logically the first objective. How long shall we have the strength to resist a determined, strong, and methodical aerial and naval offensive? On the Russian Front there will be no important news, and if there were it would probably not be in our favour.

The atmosphere in the interior of Germany is heavy and oppressive. Prospects cannot be good and, according to him, that is what the majority of the officers think even without drawing any conclusions. They observe but do not talk, and do not offer any forecasts. Amè reported these and other things to Cavallero, who, however, pretends to be too deaf to understand.

Clodius informs me that Germany is ready to cut down its claims to eighteen or perhaps fifteen billions a month, but a certain Gotzamanis<sup>333</sup> rejects these proposals. I shall have a meeting in my office to-morrow. Mussolini is convinced of the harmful uselessness of the Foreign Exchange Department and has promised me that he will abolish it soon. It will be an excellent move.

OCTOBER 10, 1942. Council of Ministers. Routine matters. But this did not prevent the Duce from repeating his optimistic statements about the future. His opinion, too, of the morale of the Italian people is full of assurance. "We cannot expect enthusiasm from a people who know that they must still face great sacrifices before victory, and must show discipline, obedience, tenacity—virtues which they have beyond all measure."

In the afternoon a meeting to discuss Greece. Clodius withdraws the proposals which he had made through official channels. On the other hand, Gotzamanis explains that Greece can no longer yield anything, for the simple but definite reason that it has nothing to offer. If we continue on the present basis the most complete bankruptcy will result within two months. To-day the middle class is already obliged to give up its jewels, its beds, at times its daughters, in order to live. Hence,

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<sup>333</sup> Gotzamanis: Greek economist.

we are facing uprisings and disorders, the proportions of which it is impossible to estimate accurately at this time. But nothing can make the Germans change their absurd and idiotic attitude, and the worst of it is that we Italians must bear most of the consequences.

Mussolini's health is unchanged. We do not notice anything special and he says nothing, but he suffers severe stomach pains. Castellani now thinks he has had a recurrence of his ulcer condition.

OCTOBER 11, 1942. I receive Himmler at the station. He has just returned from the front. He does not hide his joy at being in a beautiful city again and under a blue sky. The memory of the front is a nightmare to him, nor does he hide it. At Castel Fusano I see the Prince of Piedmont. He reproaches me because I have not been to see him for a long time. He says little about the situation and speaks, as he must in public, somewhat optimistically, but when I speak frankly about to-day and to-morrow he becomes expansive and recalls that I had the honest courage to say the same thing two or three years ago. He tells me that he has seen Mussolini, who said that 1943 will be a hard year for the Axis but that 1944 will be more favourable and that 1945 will bring us victory, but in repeating this the Prince did not hide his scepticism.

A long conversation with Himmler. He says nothing very important, but what counts is the extremely reserved tone of his conversation. He is no longer the Himmler who in Munich in 1938 was in despair because an agreement had been reached and war seemed to be averted. Now he speaks of the difficulties, of the sacrifices, of what has been done, and, above all, what remains to be done. He wanted to find out a good deal about Italy. In particular he wanted to know about the monarchy and about the Vatican. He praised the loyalty of the first and the discretion of the second.

OCTOBER 12, 1942. Nothing new in politics. The Duce was about to leave for Rocca, but had to postpone his trip because of a bad attack of gastritis, which forced him to stay in bed.

OCTOBER 13, 1942. I received Castellani, who talked to me about the Duce's health. His diagnosis, and that of Frugoni,

would seem to indicate that the old ulcer has reappeared, and is now complicated by an acute attack of dysentery. Castellani maintains that the Duce must have a long rest, but denies that there is anything to worry about. I am glad, because now, more than ever, the Duce's health is indispensable.

OCTOBER 16, 1942. The Spaniards ask that we accept Fernandez-Cuevas as Ambassador. I met him immediately after the fall of Madrid and had a good impression of him. It appears that in Brazil he did very well. In any event, he is to be preferred to Serrano Suñer, who evidently didn't know his place and had turned the Spanish Embassy into a dangerous centre of gossip.

The Germans inform us that Sapuppo<sup>334</sup> talks defeatism in Copenhagen, and that therefore it is desirable that he should be recalled. I have taken measures for his recall, without attempting to defend him. And this is because Sapuppo is essentially a fool, and to defend fools is always hopeless.

From the Duce's entourage we learn that he may not be well enough to receive Goering on Monday. In any event, he will have to receive him at home, and the Duce is somewhat embarrassed because of the modesty of his living quarters. Yesterday, however, I was told that he was almost well, and his voice over the telephone seemed sure and strong.

OCTOBER 17, 1942. After a conference with Ghigi, Giannini, and Baldoni, I telephoned the Duce about the real situation in the Greek negotiations, which have made heavy going. The Germans, with utter obtuseness, insist on demanding a ridiculous sum which in a few months would cause the total collapse of the drachma. Even before this we shall have a political crisis, because the Greek Government will resign, and then we can hold the country only by force of arms. The Duce agrees with me, and uses harsh terms about the Germans. He goes so far as to say that "the only way to explain such a bestial attitude on the part of the Germans is that they are convinced that they are lost, and since they have to die, they want to create general confusion".

But a little later Ribbentrop telephoned to tell me that he

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<sup>334</sup> Giuseppe Sapuppo: Italian Minister to Denmark since 1938. A career diplomat



has sent new proposals to Rome by Neubacher.<sup>385</sup> He added that things were going very well on the Stalingrad Front, where yesterday they had made great progress. He was ostentatiously cordial and repeated many times that we ought to meet again soon.

OCTOBER 18, 1942. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 19, 1942. Mussolini was getting ready to go to the Palazzo Venezia to receive Goering when Mackensen informed us that the Field Marshal had been stricken to-night with violent dysentery which did not "permit him to leave his throne, even for ten minutes". The expression isn't very respectful, but is a verbatim quotation from the message. It was also repeated by Bismarck, in a more ludicrous tone. It must be recognized that such an ailment is not particularly becoming to the glamorous vanity of the Reichsmarshal.

Neubacher, nominated by Ribbentrop as Commissioner Extraordinary for Greek economic and financial affairs, has come to Rome. We shall appoint a commissioner of our own with the same powers. I suggested D'Agostino, who has the necessary qualifications, and he was accepted. The Duce was in favour of a solution that "probably will help us unravel the skein".

Jacomoni makes a rather favourable report on the Albanian situation. He believes that the critical period is now over, and that, with some gesture of force against the rebels, it may be possible to bring order and quiet back to the country.

OCTOBER 20, 1942. Nothing new.

OCTOBER 21, 1942. A meeting on the economic affairs of Greece, at which are present Mackensen, Neubacher, D'Agostino, Ghigi, and Gotzamanis. Neubacher is the only one who is convinced that big things can be accomplished. The others are quite sceptical, especially Gotzamanis, who undoubtedly is the one who knows the conditions and the possibilities of his country best. I more or less share his scepticism, but naturally guard myself against saying so.

OCTOBER 22, 1942. To Leghorn for the anniversary of the death of my poor dear Maria.

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<sup>385</sup> Hermann Neubacher: Municipal administrator. Agent for I.G. Farbenindustrie in S.E. Europe, 1937-8. Mayor of Vienna, 1938-40. Commissioner for Greek economic and financial affairs. S.A. Group Leader. Arrested in 1945.

OCTOBER 23, 1942. Genoa has been heavily bombed by the British Air Force, though the number of planes was no more than twenty. Anyway, we should realize that, as time passes, aerial bombardments will become our daily fare.

I see Farinacci and Bottai. They are both exasperated by the internal situation, which is aggravated by the absolute inadequacy of the Party. There is much talk about a report by the provincial secretaries of the Fascist Party of a meeting presided over by Farnesi at Lucca, during which the "Petacci affair" was officially discussed—whether it was a good thing or whether it was an evil, what was being said about it, etc. I wouldn't believe it, except that it was confirmed to me by Aiello himself, who is serious, and who, with some others, spoke up to end this ugly spectacle.

OCTOBER 24, 1942. The British have attacked in Libya. For the moment news is favourable to us. No progress was made on land. But von Stumm<sup>336</sup> is dead, the over-all commander who had taken the place of Rommel. Genoa and Milan were again the targets of heavy bombings.

OCTOBER 25, 1942. Bismarck tells me that in German military quarters they look on the situation in Libya with a certain optimism, provided the British offensive doesn't last too long. Our supply problem is very difficult, and reserves are entirely inadequate. This is confirmed by Colonel Casero, who says that we have no fuel stocks in Libya, so that we are even sending fuel by air from Italy.

Politically, nothing new, except a short letter from Alfieri, who speaks of "the leaden weight which now physically and psychologically weighs on the capital of the Reich".

The Duce, who intended to speak before a great gathering of party leaders on the 29th, has given orders to cancel everything. What's the reason? There are three current interpretations: (1) that his doctors have forbidden the strain of a long speech; (2) that he does not wish to say anything until the Libyan offensive is decided; (3) that he intends to make big changes in the Party, and, as would be logical, he wants

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<sup>336</sup> General von Stumm: Son-in-law of old Prince Bismarck.

to speak to the new leaders. Personally, I incline toward the second interpretation.

OCTOBER 26, 1942. To-day I saw the Duce for the first time in two weeks. He has lost a great deal of weight, but his eyes are clear, his voice firm, and he looks bold. I would say that the ailment, in drying up his face and body, has made him more youthful. There wasn't anything of great importance to say, because there is silence in the field of foreign policy. The Duce was irritated with Myron Taylor and with the Vatican. He attributes the heavy bombardments of our northern Italian cities to the reports of the American envoy. "This buffoon," he said, "went back to America to report that the Italians are on their last legs, and that with one or two hard blows they can easily be beaten." Anyway, "he learned these things from the Holy See, where information comes by way of the parish priests. But," says the Duce, "there they don't see that the people who follow the priests are the least courageous, and the worst, always ready to weep and to beg." In any case, he wanted me to let the Vatican know that "Concordat or no Concordat, if Myron Taylor tries to return to Italy he will be put in handcuffs".

I do not share the Duce's diagnosis of the causes which have led the Anglo-Saxons to aim these hard blows at Italy. Maybe Myron Taylor is involved in it, but very little. It is rather that the whole offensive plan of the Americans and the British is now being applied.

In Libya it seems that they are holding well, but with heavy losses, and with the hope that pressure will not be maintained too long.

OCTOBER 27, 1942. Ley has come here to head the National Socialist Mission of the Twentieth Anniversary of the March on Rome. Vidussoni brings him to me. Ley is vulgar, both in appearance and in the way he thinks. In fact, so coarse that I ask myself how he was ever able to attain a position of leadership. He says nothing new, but adds a new lie to the propaganda line: the whole Stalingrad action has cost the Germans only three thousand dead. I wouldn't believe it, even if he multiplied it by ten.

Pavolini informs me that the Duce talked to him about the

incident which occurred during the report of the provincial secretaries at Lucca, when they discussed the "Petacci affair". He faced the argument squarely and said that no one has the right to "investigate and judge the emotional life of anybody else", and then he went into the history of the Renaissance to show that all men had their love affairs. He was annoyed at the Party. He has every reason to be.

OCTOBER 28, 1942. The Twentieth Anniversary celebration. It was a single ceremony, the inauguration of the new quarters for the Museum of the Revolution. Mussolini appeared in public for the first time since his illness. In the open, in uniform, surrounded by many people, he seemed thin and more tired than two days ago at the Palazzo Venezia. He was welcomed in a way that I would call affectionate. But the organization of the ceremony was far from coming up to par, lacking even the least sense of camaraderie among its members. The fact is that the present secretariat of the party is made up of unknown men, to whom we are, in turn, unknown. This explains the coolness of the ceremony. It explains also a good many of the serious difficulties of the internal situation. On this very day of the recurrence of the Fascist celebration, the inefficiency of the Party is felt more strongly than ever, because the party is headed by incapable, discredited, and questionable men.

The fight in Libya continues to be hard. We are holding on tenaciously. To hear the High Command talk, the only danger is our deficiency in stocks and transportation. Tactical situation good, logistic situation dangerous. I am no technician, but I believe that in a battle of this kind logistics will play the decisive role.

OCTOBER 29, 1942. Another oil tanker was sunk this evening. This is a black mark for the situation in Libya. Bismarck has learned from Rintelen that Rommel is optimistic about the military quality of the troops, but that he is literally terrified by the supply situation. Just now not only is fuel lacking but also munitions and food.

The Duce is in good humour. We have spoken of a certain Rosso, who has gone to intrigue at Court for a separate peace. He will be handcuffed. The Duce gave me a letter from Hitler on the Twentieth Anniversary of the founding of the Fascist

Party, which is extremely laudatory and sugar-coated. Mussolini expressed himself in harsh terms against the Genoese people, who are "certainly the most hostile to the war and who have given proof of moral weakness". On the other hand, he praised the Neapolitans, who have been made fatalistic by centuries of difficulties and misery to the point of composing ironical songs about the British during the air bombardment.

A long visit from Donna Edvige Mussolini. She judges the internal situation with much good sense and is concerned about the future. She serves as a mouthpiece of what is said in various circles, and would like me to take the Ministry of the Interior. She believes—and she is right—that we must give our policy a more humane character, but for nothing in the world would I go to the Ministry of the Interior.

OCTOBER 30, 1942. Nothing of any particular importance.

OCTOBER 31, 1942. General Ambrosio, who in the past was very optimistic, is now notably less so. With regard to Libya, he maintains that if the British continue to develop a battle of attrition it will be difficult for us to avoid a retreat; and with regard to Russia, he fears that during the winter there will be a Soviet counter-offensive and that it will start against our armies. Although everything has been done to assure our troops decent living conditions, yet we must expect difficulties greater than last year, because now they have no local houses to live in, nor have they the coal that was available in the Donetz basin. All this leads General Ambrosio to modify his rosy predictions.

I received the Swiss banker, Vieli, to whom I offered many olive branches. I strongly believe in the present and future European function of Switzerland. Furthermore, we have great need of her now.

Alessi<sup>337</sup> informs me that Petacci's brother wrote a letter to Tamburini,<sup>338</sup> saying that Castellani had made a wrong diagnosis and cure for the Duce. He wanted Tamburini to put pressure on Donna Rachele, with whom he has cordial relations, to persuade her to call in a new doctor.

NOVEMBER 1, 1942. Sorrentino, who is an intelligent

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<sup>337</sup> Chino Alessi: Italian correspondent in Cairo for "Trieste Piccolo". The newspaper was later seized by British military authorities.

<sup>338</sup> Tullio Tamburini: Minister of the Interior, succeeding Buffarini.

journalist, even if odd and a little bit sectarian, returns from a long stay in Russia with marked pessimism. To listen to him, even the sanctum sanctorum of the German spirit—the Army—is weakened by its worst enemy: the doubting mind. “This year they were fighting to avoid defeat. It hasn’t gone very well. Now the Germans themselves believe in defeat, and perhaps many of them even hope for it.”

I spoke to our Minister in Lisbon, Frasoni, who is not brilliant, but an honest man. The attitude towards the Axis has changed very much in Portugal, and all the Anglo-Saxon preparations lead one to believe that in a short while a powerful blow will be delivered in the Mediterranean, to strike at Italy, which is judged to be the Achilles’ heel of the Axis. Mussolini has written a letter to Hitler in answer to his. He concludes by arranging a meeting in Salzburg for the end of November.

On the golf course, I meet Senator Castellani, who expresses himself favourably about the Duce’s health. The crisis is over, convalescence may still require some time, but it will only be convalescence.

NOVEMBER 2, 1942. The Duce is in very good humour. Maybe because the progress of operations in Libya is quite satisfactory. He vents his displeasure on the *Osservatore Romano*, which is hurling anti-dictatorial darts, and this leads him to observe that Catholicism and Christianity are on the decline “because they wish to make people believe a number of things which do not agree with our modern concept of life. For example, at a certain point I decided that even in the matter of miracles it was necessary to encourage local production, and I referred this to the Vatican. As a result, they launched the Madonna of Loreto in competition with Lourdes, and one has to agree that they did wonderful business.”

Farnesi has come to see me. He feels the earth giving way beneath him, and would like to build some bridges. I did not conceal from him that on many questions I disagree with the present directors of the Party, for reasons both fundamental and formal, but I haven’t slammed the door on them. They will be, I think, shortlived, and for my part I am not going to help them keep their jobs. But I don’t think it is sensible to start internal contention in the Party at a moment like this.

## SECTION VI

November 3, 1942—December 23, 1943

### *COLLAPSE*

BRITISH attack in Libya—Axis forces routed—American landings in Algiers and Morocco—Ciano goes to Munich to meet Hitler and Laval—Germany occupies the whole of France—Weygand arrested—Spain begins to mobilise—Bombing of Turin—Laval offers Hitler full French collaboration—Toulon occupied by German troops—Churchill attacks Italy—Goering visits Italy to confer with Mussolini—Conference with King Victor Emmanuel—Italian and German High Commands to be removed from Rome in order to avoid bombing—Ciano and Laval summoned to German H.Q.—Bad news from the Russian front—Assassination of Admiral Darlan—Mussolini in bad health—Impossibility of separate peace with Russia—Discussions on the Chetnik problem—Albanian President resigns—German retreat from Stalingrad—Fall of Tripoli—Casablanca meeting—Gen. Cavallero replaced by Gen. Ambrosio—Churchill meets members of the Turkish Government—Mussolini changes his Cabinet—Ciano offered Governorship of Albania, but accepts Ambassadorship to Holy See—Ciano's last entries, written in prison, December, 1943.

NOVEMBER 3, 1942. A new and more violent British attack renders our Libyan situation very dangerous. Our forces are wearing out and supplies are arriving in minute quantities. We really seem to be condemned to fight wars overseas. That crook of a Cavallero continues to give the watchword of optimism at headquarters, but on the side lines they see the future as very black, and are already thinking of withdrawing to defend Tripolitania. Rommel judges the situation to be "very serious". This, at any rate, is what Bismarck reports. Bismarck is in deadly fear of betraying himself, and urges that his confidential information be given to no one.

NOVEMBER 4, 1942. After a long interval I see Cavallero in the Duce's antechamber. He tells me how things are going in

Libya. Two days ago Rommel supposedly wanted to begin his withdrawal, but Hitler nailed him to the spot with the order to "show the troops the way of victory or death". Mussolini did the same with our forces. Now the battle is in full swing, and Cavallero, who is usually unduly optimistic, maintains an attitude of reserve, though he adds quickly that "his faith is intact". I believe little in any of the virtues of this charlatan, and especially his type of faith convinces me least of all. From Gibraltar we learn that a great convoy is being prepared, in which are included even monitors with heavy-calibre guns. This suggests the possibility of a landing in Morocco.

The Duce is resentful against the Vatican because of the attitude of the *Osservatore Romano*, and he wishes to "break a few wooden heads". He has had this in mind for a long time, and the Party encourages him. I disagree with this, and, up to the moment, have succeeded in avoiding any crisis with the Vatican. But now he wants to give personal instructions to Guariglia, who will come with me to the Palazzo Venezia to-morrow. I do not think this is really the time to create a new problem, and such a serious one, especially now that the prestige of the Church is undoubtedly very high.

NOVEMBER 5, 1942. The Libyan front collapses. Mussolini telephones early in the morning to tell me to postpone Kallay's trip to Rome. In fact, this is not the moment to welcome any guests. Later I see the Duce at the Palazzo Venezia. He is pale. His face is drawn; he is tired. But he still keeps his balance. He judges the situation to be serious, but he still has some hope that the English can be held on the line of Fukra-El-Qattara. (Even Cavallero, who is really the one responsible for all our troubles, affirms, on the other hand, that no attempt at resistance is possible except on the Sollum-Halfaia line.) The Duce also speaks to Guariglia about relations with the Vatican, and has calmed down a great deal since yesterday, giving instructions for a completely moderate step. I see Grandi and some others. The news from Libya makes them gloomy, but does not surprise them. For some time past a sense of irrepressible pessimism has taken possession of the Italians.

NOVEMBER 6, 1942. The Libyan retreat is assuming



more and more the character of a rout. We know nothing of our 10th Army Corps, cut off by the British forces, and even the detachments which are withdrawing are massacred by air bombing. Even the Duce thinks that, as matters stand, Libya will probably be lost, and he quickly adds "that from some points of view this represents an advantage, because this region has cost us our merchant fleet and we can better concentrate on the defence of Italy itself". Nevertheless, we cannot say to-day where resistance will be attempted, even if we disregard possible attacks from the west, whence an exceptionally large convoy is advancing.

Mussolini asked me if I was keeping my diary up to date. When I answered affirmatively, he said that it will serve to prove how the Germans, both in military and political fields, have always acted without his knowledge. But what does his strange question really hide?

I have seen Gambarà, Fougier, Pirelli, and Admiral Mancini. They are all staggered by the news from Libya, and to-day even the most optimistic see the morrow in dark colours. The rank and file, on the other hand, believe that this time it is a question of one of the usual see-saw races across the desert.

NOVEMBER 7, 1942. To-day the Duce sees the situation favourably. A certain amount of resistance which Rommel has offered the British at Mersa Matruh, as well as the arrival of reinforcements in Libya, lead him to believe that some change may take place in the course of events.

But what will he do, or, rather, what will the various convoys do that have left Gibraltar and are eastward bound? There are various conjectures. According to the Germans, they are for the provisioning of Malta or an attempt at landing in Tripolitania in order to fall upon Rommel's rear. According to our General Staff, they are for the occupation of French bases in North Africa. The Duce, too, is of this opinion; in fact, he believes that the landing will be accomplished by the Americans, who will meet almost no resistance from the French. I share the Duce's opinion; in fact, I believe that North Africa is ready to hoist the de Gaullist flag. All this is exceedingly serious for us.

NOVEMBER 8, 1942. At five-thirty in the morning von Ribbentrop telephoned to inform me of American landings

in Algerian and Moroccan ports. He was rather nervous, and wanted to know what we intended to do. I must confess that, having been caught unawares, I was too sleepy to give a very satisfactory answer.

The Duce's reaction was lively as usual. He speaks at once of a landing in Corsica and of the occupation of France. But what forces are there for such undertakings? In the opinion of the most responsible people of our General Staff, this is not at all feasible, but the Germans are certainly ready. Officially, I have not learned anything from the Germans. I know from Anna Maria Bismarck that at the Embassy they are literally terrified by the blow, which is very severe and, above all, absolutely unexpected.

During the evening I see General Amè, who brings me up to date. There is still resistance in the cities, but pressure from the de Gaullists and the Americans will soon overcome the small amount of French resistance. Amè believes that within the next week the Allies will have extended their dominion over all the colonies, including Tunisia, and that within two weeks they will be able to attack Libya from the west. The situation that will result from this is extremely serious. Italy will become the centre of attack by the Allies in the offensive against the Axis. Amè says that the morale of the Army is sensationally low.

NOVEMBER 9, 1942. During the night von Ribbentrop telephoned. Either the Duce or I must go to Munich as soon as possible. Laval will also be there. It is time to consider our line of conduct towards France. I wake the Duce. He is not very anxious to leave, especially since he is not yet feeling at all well. I shall go, and these are the instructions: if France is ready to collaborate loyally she will receive all possible aid from us; if, on the other hand, she plays hot and cold, we are going to adopt preventive measures: occupation of the free zone and landing in Corsica.

In Munich I find von Ribbentrop at the station. He is tired out, thin, and courteous. Laval, who is making a long journey by car, will arrive during the night.

I have my first conversation with Hitler this evening. He has not built up any illusions about the French desire to fight, and now among the rebels is General Giraud, who has brains and

courage. Hence, we must make our supreme decisions before it is too late. He, Hitler, will listen to Laval. But whatever he says will not modify his already definite point of view: the total occupation of France, landing in Corsica, a bridgehead in Tunisia. Hitler is neither nervous nor restless, but he does not underrate American initiative and he wants to meet it with all resources at his disposal. Goering does not hesitate to declare that the occupation of North Africa represents the first point scored by the Allies since the beginning of the war.

NOVEMBER 10, 1942. Hitler, Goering, von Ribbentrop, and myself at the Führerbahn. Decisions have been made: to move, especially because the position of Admiral Darlan at Algiers is quite ambiguous and leads one to suspect some understanding with the rebels. A conference with Laval is almost superfluous, because he will be told nothing, or almost nothing, of what has been decided.

Laval, with his white tie and middle-class French peasant attire, is very much out of place in the great salon among so many uniforms. He tries to speak in a familiar tone about his journey and his long sleep in the car, but his words are unheeded. Hitler treats him with frigid courtesy. The conversation is brief. The Führer is the first to speak and asks pointedly if France is in a position to assure us landing points in Tunisia. Laval, like a good Frenchman, would like to discuss it and take advantage of the occasion to obtain concessions from Italy. I do not have time to interrupt, because Hitler, with the firmest decision, declares that he does not intend to take up at this time a discussion of Italian claims, which are more than modest. Laval cannot take upon himself the responsibility of yielding Tunis and Bizerta to the Axis, and he himself advises that he should be faced with a *fait accompli*; in short, we should draw up a note for Vichy in which it is stated what the Axis has decided to do. The poor man could not even imagine the *fait accompli* that the Germans were to place before him. Not a word was said to Laval about the impending action—the orders to occupy France were being given while he was smoking his cigarette and conversing with various people in the next room. Von Ribbentrop told me that Laval would be informed only the next morning at eight o'clock, that because of information

received during the night Hitler had been obliged to proceed to the total occupation of the country. Laval owes it to me that a communiqué was not published which, even though it was not stated in so many words, gave the impression that Laval had given his approval to all the measures decided by the Axis. And yet the words loyalty and honour are always on the lips of our dear Germans!

I come back to Rome. I find Mussolini agitated because our military operations are not going as they should. Those in Corsica are carried out with a flotilla of cutters, which is absurd, and Vercellino has requested a five-hour delay before moving. In Libya, too, Rommel's withdrawal continues at an accelerated pace. Now Mussolini thinks that we shall have God to thank if we can succeed in stopping at the old Agedabia line. I see a few people, and gather the impression that the events of the last few days have been a sad blow for the country, which, for the first time, is asking many questions without finding answers.

NOVEMBER 12, 1942. The march of the Italo-German troops is proceeding in France, and also in Corsica, without encountering the least opposition. The French people are certainly unrecognizable. I thought there would be some gesture of opposition, at least for the honour of the flag. But nothing of the kind. Only the French Navy made it known to us that the fleet would remain loyal to Vichy, and that it does not want the occupation of Toulon by the Axis. The Germans agreed and also, willy-nilly, the Duce, who, however, does not trust their word of honour and thinks that some day we shall wake up to find the port of Toulon empty.

We shall see what will happen in Tunisia, where the first German contingents are supposed to arrive to-night.

Rommel continues to withdraw from Libya at break-neck speed. There is a great deal of friction between Italian and German troops. At Halfaia they even fired on one another, because the Germans took all our lorries in order to withdraw more rapidly, leaving our divisions in the middle of the desert, where masses of men are literally dying of hunger and thirst.

Churchill has made a great speech in the House. It is clear from what he said that all the British and American forces will hurl themselves on Italy in order to knock us out of the fight.

thing that was done in Munich, and explores the situation fully. He asks particularly for news about Spain, Switzerland, and Turkey. He says very little about what has happened and is happening in the Mediterranean, but is particularly concerned about the scarcity of troops in Italy, and especially in Rome, where even the Grenadiers have been taken away. He asks me to insist to the Duce that some troops must be returned to Italy, begging me at the same time not to tell him that the King asked this, "because otherwise he might suspect secret dealings". He defends the armed forces passionately, pronounces no judgment on Cavallero, but "if they are thinking of a new head of the armed forces, they should consider the oldest, who are the best", and he cites "Ago, Amantea, and Geloso". He talks in a friendly way about Guzzoni. As always, a certain element of Germanophobia is not lacking in his words. On the progress of the war he repeats a rather generic statement of faith, but he asks me many questions about Washington and London, advising me to cling to any thread which may yet be re-knotted, "even if it is as thin as a spider's web".

I saw Del Croix. He is disturbed, but not surprised about the situation. He, too, condemns the absence from Italy of our best divisions. He inveighs against dictatorship of the type of the Roman, Marius, "because, with us, all plebeian dictatorships have degenerated into tyrannies", and he adds that the single great merit of Marius was that of having beaten the Teutons.

NOVEMBER 20, 1942. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 21, 1942. Council of Ministers dealing with routine matters. At the end the Duce spoke to summarize and to throw light on the present situation. In brief, he said: (a) that the food situation is a great deal better than forecasts, which had been very gloomy; (b) that the military situation in Cyrenaica is progressing towards stopping the enemy at Agheila-Marada, and perhaps getting the upper hand, while the trend of operations in Tunisia is favourable to the Axis; (c) that the internal situation is excellent, except for the alarmists; (d) that Hitler, acting on a suggestion made by him, has agreed to send one hundred anti-aircraft batteries for the protection of our cities, which are suffering severe punishment every night from the R.A.F.

To-night, in fact, it has been Turin's turn, and the city was the object of a bombing that was heavier than any other attacks, including those on Genoa. This now raises serious problems: the evacuation of the cities, the question of supplies, and the reduction of the industrial potential in Italy. It is useless to build up illusions. All this has a considerable bearing on morale, and the spirit of resistance is less than one might expect. We must not confuse endurance with resistance; they are two very different things.

NOVEMBER 22, 1942. The Duce remarks that His Majesty talked to him about replacing Cavallero, mentioning the same names as he did to me, but Mussolini, who in these days is again optimistic, says that we should not make changes in our command while we are engaged on two fronts.

A Russian offensive on the Don has achieved notable success, and deserves the most prudent attention.

NOVEMBER 23, 1942. Bismarck says that General von Pohl,<sup>339</sup> returning from Libya, was pessimistic, notwithstanding the fact that "Rommel is in good humour". From the confidential talks that Colonel Montezemolo<sup>340</sup> of our General Staff has had with our foreign office liaison officer, it appears that the Germans intend to have another try at saving Tripolitania, while we believe that it would be more useful to concentrate everything on the defence of Tunisia. This causes a certain uneasiness in our High Command, except, naturally, Cavallero, who, having become the servant of the Germans, puts his personal interests before the interests of his country.

In the country, pessimism and concern are growing beyond all measure. One cannot speak with any person of any class or station in life without hearing the same thing.

NOVEMBER 24, 1942. All West Africa has joined the Darlan movement. The fact is of great importance. A large reserve of men goes over to the Allies, as well as the base of Dakar, and a considerable part of the Navy. Reactions are just beginning to come in, but the event is important.

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<sup>339</sup> General Ritter von Pohl: Later in charge of S.S. Central Administration office, responsible for concentration camps. Arrested near Bremen in May, 1946, by the British, and taken to Nuremberg.

<sup>340</sup> Colonel Giuseppe Montezemolo: Member of Italian General Staff. Secretary at meeting of the four Marshals, Goering, Kesselring, Rommel, and Cavallero.

Alfieri arrives from Berlin. He still harps upon the official optimism in German circles. Personally, he appears to be concerned because he believes that the Italian people may consider him one of those mainly responsible for our entry into the war. He does not even suspect that the Italian people merely consider him a fool.

New and more accurate X-rays of the Duce, which tend to prove that his trouble is caused by a rheumatic localization in the spinal column. If this is true, as I hope it is, within a short time he can completely recover his health.

NOVEMBER 25, 1942. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 26, 1942. Information from Africa is, in general, worse. Both in Tunisia and in Tripolitania the position of our forces becomes more critical; at the same time pressure from the enemy increases. Last night forty American tanks arrived at the gates of Tunis. Fougier, who is a realist and an honest man, thinks that within a few days we shall be driven from Tunis, and within a month from all of Africa. Mussolini, too, must more or less have this same idea, since he said in telephoning to me about the commercial agreement with Rumania: "We should not insist too much on increasing our quota of petrol. I believe that next year our needs will be distinctly less."

Von Mackensen communicates to me the details of a letter from Laval to Hitler. He offers full French collaboration with the Axis, but what does a Laval from Auvergne really represent? How can he speak for France? The German answer was prudent indeed. Not Hitler but von Ribbentrop thanked Laval in vague terms, and another conference has been postponed indefinitely.

The Russian attack on the Volga-Don basin continues, and it appears that the results are really very important. But we know nothing very specific about this. We must accept what the Germans tell us.

NOVEMBER 27, 1942. The important event of the day is the occupation of the port of Toulon by German troops. During the night a communication reached the Duce from Hitler regarding the decision he had taken. Communication took place through the military, and I was kept in the dark

about everything until noon, when Cavallero telephoned me. No one knows yet how things have gone. Two things are certain: that there was a certain amount of resistance, and that the French Navy is completely scuttled. I do not yet know the French reaction to what has happened, but in any event it would not seem such as to increase sympathy for Laval and for the Germans. For us Italians there is one advantage—that in any eventuality a naval power in the Mediterranean has been cancelled for many years. The necessity for carefully preserving our own Navy becomes more and more obvious.

NOVEMBER 28, 1942. Nothing new.

NOVEMBER 29, 1942. I go to Leghorn.

NOVEMBER 30, 1942. Goering comes to Rome without advance notice. From what is said by members of the General Staff, the visit was prompted by the fact that Rommel has left Libya secretly to see the Führer. We protested, and the assistant German military attaché has been told that if an Italian general had behaved in this way he would have been brought before a court-martial. Now Goering comes to settle the trouble, but this discord is not merely a matter of form. Rommel does not consider it possible to hold Tripolitania and would like to withdraw into Tunisia at once. Bastico is of the opposite opinion, and among the members of the Italian General Staff many share his ideas. We shall see what decisions emerge from the conference that is to be held to-day at the Palazzo Venezia.

Amè is very pessimistic about our resistance in Tunisia. Taking everything into consideration, he thinks that we shall be dislodged in about ten days. By Christmas we shall be out of Libya. This raises very serious problems for us.

Churchill makes a speech which relates particularly to Italy.<sup>341</sup> Unfortunately, I do not see what means are at our disposal to-day to frustrate his programme of scientifically

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<sup>341</sup> Churchill broadcast, November, 29, 1942: "... Our operations in French North Africa will enable us to extend the war and to bring home to the Italian Fascist state, in a manner not hitherto dreamed of by its guilty leaders, or still less by the unfortunate Italian people Mussolini has led, exploited and disgraced. Already the centres of war industry in North Italy are being subjected to harder treatment than any of our cities experienced in the winter of 1940. But if the enemy should in due course be blasted from the Tunisian tip, which is our aim, the whole of the south of Italy—all the naval bases, all the munition establishments and other military objectives wherever situated—will be brought under prolonged scientific and shattering air attack. . . ."



demolishing our country. In these last few days Turin has suffered more hard ordeals.

DECEMBER 1, 1942. I have seen the Duce again after an interval of ten days, during which he had stayed at Villa Torlonia for reasons of health. Physically he is thinner, but energetic and vivacious. To-morrow he will address the Chamber. The occasion for this is Churchill's attack, and in his speech he intends "to debate with him without, however, resorting to insults as he has done. Besides," he added, "Churchill's address honours me because it proves that I am the real antagonist of Great Britain." Later he sent me a report of his conversation with Goering. The Germans will send three armoured divisions to Africa, the Adolf Hitler, the Hermann Goering, and the Deutschland—"three names that mean much to German honour". In Libya the situation is confused. Everything is in the hands of the English, who, by quickly taking the initiative, can easily dislodge us from our present line of defence. We are planning to make Buerat the line to which we shall retreat, and it has the advantage of placing the Sirte desert in front of us rather than at our backs. In general, I found the Duce optimistic both as regards the war and the internal situation. The officers in Goering's party speak with assurance. They declare they are certain that within three months the German armoured forces will reach Morocco. With respect to the conflict in Russia they also make rosy prophecies.

From Bucharest telegrams arrive from Bova-Scoppa which give evidence of the nervousness caused by the information from the Don River front. They accuse Antonescu of having involved Rumania too much in a struggle in which she has no direct interest.

DECEMBER 2, 1942. After a long silence Mussolini has spoken to the Chamber. The reception of the speech by the National Council was very warm, even if in the hall it was easy to recognize the people who disagree in private. Physically the Duce appeared quite thin, but none the less vigorous and at times as fiery as ever. The speech? It is too early to say what effect it will have. But it is clear that it does not introduce new facts or opinions, nor indeed could it have done so. It will not be difficult for English propaganda to refute it effectively, even

if it does not avail itself of Mussolini's glaring slip about the "dinner jackets worn by the English while drinking their five o'clock tea". (Edda was aghast at this mistake. She knows the English and knows how they will laugh at it, and she immediately wrote me a letter to order the newspaper version to be corrected.)

Bismarck spoke confidentially to d'Aieta about Goering's visit. He says that the Germans are the first to be convinced that there is nothing more to be done in Africa, and that all Goering's promises are bound to be left up in the clouds. But it is a matter of saving the reputation of Rommel, who has a big name in Germany and is one of the soldiers most loyal to the Nazis. Hence Goering's principal aim is to create confusion and give documentary proof that the blame for everything rests upon our poor organization of transport, ships, railways, etc. For this reason he has begun to snub everyone, including Admiral Riccardi. Bismarck added that the military technicians of the Embassy are surprised at the amount of nonsense which the Reichsmarshal has been capable of talking.

DECEMBER 3, 1942. Scannavacca confirms our opinion that Goering has made an extremely bad impression, even on our officers of the High Command. Colonel Montezemolo, secretary of the meeting of the four Marshals, Goering, Kesselring, Rommel, and Cavallero, said that he was surprised by the "proud ignorance" of the Reichsmarshal. Now Goering has gone to Naples, declaring that he intends to appoint "the secretary of the Party as Superintendent of Transport in Naples; he is a young and active man, who agrees with Goering". In point of fact, Milone the secretary, an excellent youth, is a doctor. Can it be that Goering is really thinking of appointing himself the Reichsprotektor of Italy?

DECEMBER 4, 1942. Nothing new.

DECEMBER 5, 1942. Guariglia has spoken with Maglione on the question of the bombing of Rome. The Holy See is doing its best to prevent it, and the Anglo-Americans have been informed that the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, could not calmly witness the destruction of the Eternal City. The English Minister, Osborne, answered that Rome is not only the city of the Catholics, but also the headquarters of the High Command, a

large German command, and has many airports, as well as a very important railway dispersal point. The Allies, therefore, assume full freedom of action, at least against military objectives. Cardinal Maglione therefore pointed out that the removal of the commands from Rome would strengthen the Holy Father in his task. I informed the Duce of this, but as yet do not know his reaction. On the other hand, I have learned that the King is favourable to this, and he himself had thought of such an action.

Goering continues to preside over meetings to which he invites civilians, Buffarini, technical Ministers, et al. Buffarini reports that the meetings are banal and useless, and he is quite displeased at Cavallero's servile attitude towards the Reichsmarshal. Yesterday, when Goering arrived at High Command headquarters, he was received in the court-yard by our military chiefs. This made the young officers present indignant, and they have reported it to me.

DECEMBER 6, 1942. The Duce has dictated to me a brief summary of his conferences with Goering, which I have preserved elsewhere. No conclusion has been reached in the political field, but the Reichsmarshal has observed that our military efforts will have to be redoubled if we wish to avoid further grief in Africa. We, too, had come to this conclusion without the need of his precious insight.

In principle Mussolini is not against the transfer elsewhere of the High Command, "in order that it may not be said that he has remained under the big umbrella of Catholicism to protect himself from British bombs".

Von Mackensen officially invites the Duce to go to Germany between the 15th and 20th of the month. Laval will attend the second part of the conference. To-morrow the Duce will give his answer.

D'Aieta has had a long conversation with the Prince of Piedmont. In general, it was satisfactory, even though he is inclined to see the situation everywhere in dark colours.

DECEMBER 7, 1942. Conference with the King. We went into details about the situation. We spoke of the advisability of transferring the High Command elsewhere in order to avoid the bombing of Rome, and, accepting my suggestion, he told me he will propose Fiuggi to the Duce as the most suitable site.

Then he mentioned a bit of advice once given by his grandfather, King Victor Emmanuel II. When meeting people, one must say two things in order to be assured of a good reception: "How beautiful your city is!" and "How young you look!" The King maintains that in his long experience they never fail. But some minutes later, when he began to speak well to me about Leghorn, I took the liberty of interrupting, and this amused him.

The Duce agrees to the visit to Germany at the time proposed, but without enthusiasm.

DECEMBER 8, 1942. The Duce has said that he will go to Germany only on one condition, namely that he will be allowed to take his meals alone in his rooms, "because he does not want a lot of ravenous Germans to notice that he is compelled to live on rice and milk only". But, I may add, his health has considerably improved during the last few days, so that it seems almost normal.

He is optimistic about the African military situation, especially because he has decided not to defend the Agheila-Marada line in Tripolitania, but to fall back to Buerat so as to leave the four hundred kilometres of the Sirte desert between us and the British.

DECEMBER 9, 1942. Another effective bombing of Turin by the R.A.F.

I see Amè on his return from Nice, where he met Admiral Canaris. The former repeats his usual pessimism, which he bases above all on news coming from Russia regarding Soviet attacks and German exhaustion. For Africa, also, he makes dark forecasts, though for the distant future.

Amè, for his part, sees the situation with a little more optimism than he did ten days or so ago. This, naturally, only for the immediate aspect; his ideas for the future have not changed.

But the proofs of bad strategy given by the Anglo-Americans in Tunisia lead him to believe that the fight will still be a long one. The Duce, to whom Amè reported Canaris's concern, showed no interest in it. In fact, he asserted his confidence in quick victory.

Franco spoke in very friendly terms about the Axis. Mussolini sent him congratulations through our Ambassador, but "he

does not intend to move a finger to accelerate Spain's intervention in the war, because it would be more of a hindrance than a help".

DECEMBER 10, 1942. No news.

DECEMBER 11, 1942. Nothing new.

DECEMBER 12, 1942. The removal of our Commands has been decided and I shall pass the news on to Guariglia so that he may bring it to the knowledge of the Holy See. Bombing of Rome must be avoided absolutely; the population is very much disturbed, and the two alarms of yesterday were enough to create profound uneasiness.

DECEMBER 13, 1942. The British have attacked in Libya. For the moment we are resisting well, but this upsets the withdrawal from the Buerat line.

Mussolini is calm. This morning he was going through the censorship reports and came to very pessimistic conclusions about humanity. Two things, he believes, have really eternal value, "bread and guts". The rest are dreams, ideals, sacrifices—nothing.

Notwithstanding the fact that we told the Germans that we did not consider Cavallero's presence advisable at the coming meeting at Klessheim, they have still insisted that he should come. It becomes more and more obvious that they consider him their man.

Guariglia talked to the Vatican about the removal of the command. It appears that Osborne<sup>342</sup> insists especially on the removal of the Germans. When Guariglia said to Monsignor Montini<sup>343</sup> that even the Duce would leave the capital, the Monsignor replied: "I think he will have to make another march on Rome to come back."

Jacomoni is quite optimistic about the Albanian situation, in spite of the many incidents which are occurring. He believes, and with good reason, that Albanian affairs run parallel with international events. He would now like to change Kruia, but he doesn't regret the experiment. "He is a man," he said, "who, in our own interest, we should not have destroyed at once."

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<sup>342</sup> Sir Francis d'Arcy Godolphin Osborne: British Minister to the Holy See since 1936.

<sup>343</sup> Monsignor Giovanni B. Montini: Assistant to the Cardinal Secretary of State.

DECEMBER 14, 1942. Ribbentrop informs us that "because of operations in the East" it is advisable to postpone the meeting at Klessheim for a few days. He is not sure when the meeting will take place, but hopes that it will still be possible before Christmas.

In Libya the British attack is rather heavy, but our greatest difficulty is the scarcity of fuel. In the last few days our Navy has also suffered severe losses.

DECEMBER 15, 1942. Nothing new.

Late in the evening Mackensen asks to see me. New proposals are made for the meeting. Hitler cannot leave the High Command, nor can he postpone the meeting. And since he does not want the Duce to face such a long journey, almost to the old borders of Lithuania, he invites me to go as soon as possible with Cavallero. He tells us beforehand that the conversations will be important and will last a few days. I will answer him to-morrow.

DECEMBER 16, 1942. As I had anticipated, the Duce does not feel inclined to face such a long journey, nor does he care to interrupt his electro-therapeutic cure, which seems to be doing him a great deal of good. I shall have to go, and this time provided with exact instructions. Mussolini is especially anxious that Hitler should know (and he has already spoken of it to Goering) that he considers it extremely advisable to come to an agreement with Russia, or at least to fix upon a defensive line that can be held by small forces. Nineteen forty-three will be the year of the Anglo-Saxon effort. Mussolini considers that the Axis must have the greatest possible number of divisions available in order to defend itself in Africa, in the Balkans, and perhaps even in the West. I shall note elsewhere the instructions received and shall have stenographic notes made of the conference. Just now it is interesting to note that Bismarck has told d'Aieta that the Führer has tried to avoid the meeting with the Duce, because he does not want to enter into general political discussions. It seems that we shall speak only of France and that Laval will be present.

Things are going badly in Cyrenaica, where the British have forced us into a disorderly retreat, making us fight under the worst tactical and logistic conditions.

The Duce confirms the removal of the German Commands from Rome, and I give instructions that Cardinal Maglione shall be informed immediately. Perhaps it will be worth while to put in writing the negotiations that have taken place. We shall never have a British assurance that they will not bomb, but I continue to be optimistic.

DECEMBER 17, 1942. On my way to Hitler's headquarters.

DECEMBER 18, 1942. I recorded my conversations in the forest of Görlitz and made notes of my general impressions. Now, as usual, a few details.

The atmosphere is heavy. To the bad news there should perhaps be added the sadness of that damp forest and the boredom of collective living in the Command barracks. There isn't a spot of colour, not one vivid note. Waiting-rooms filled with people smoking, eating, chatting. Kitchen odour, smell of uniforms, of boots. All this is in great measure unnecessary, at least for a mass of people who have no reason to be here. First among them is Ribbentrop, who compels the greater number of his employees to live a senseless troglodite life which, in fact, impedes his normal work as Foreign Minister.

When I arrived no one tried to conceal from me or from my colleagues the uneasiness over the news of the break-through on the Russian front. There were open attempts to put the blame on us. Hewel, who is very close to Hitler, had the following conversation (in English) with Pansa. Pansa: "Had our Army many losses?" Hewel: "No losses at all; they are running." Pansa: "As you did in Moscow last year?" Hewel: "Exactly."

DECEMBER 19, 1942. Laval has made a journey that he could have spared himself. After two days on the train they first sat him at a tea table, then at a dinner table, and did not let him open his mouth. The moment he tried to speak the Führer would interrupt him and deliver a long dissertation. (I believe that at heart Hitler is glad to be Hitler, because this permits him to talk all the time.) Laval is a filthy Frenchman—the filthiest of all Frenchmen. To get into the good graces of the German bosses he doesn't hesitate to betray his own compatriots and to defame his own unhappy country. He said

one clever thing, that for him it is difficult to govern France, since everywhere he turns he hears people call out: "Laval au poteau."

Still, how the Germans respond to the charm of the French! Even of this Frenchman. Except for Hitler, all the others were crowding around trying to talk to him, or to get close to him; it looked like the entrance of an erstwhile great lord into a circle of new-rich parvenus.

Ribbentrop also did his best, but he ended with a gaffe. He reminded Laval that his "eminent compatriot" Napoleon had once been in that same forest. If I am not mistaken, Napoleon was there under entirely different conditions.

A fact that should be remembered: In 1939 Cavallero went to Germany bearing a letter from Mussolini. Now Keitel, recalling that meeting, said that they had already then decided on the war against Poland, even to the setting of the date. And all this, naturally, while they were committed with us to a period of at least three years of peace.

DECEMBER 21, 1942. Return journey.

DECEMBER 22, 1942. I return to Rome. I find considerable panic over the news from the Russian front, especially since the Duce, in speaking to people of a possible peace with Russia, has kindled many hopes.

Mussolini is in a rather bad humour. I turned over to him the report on my visit, in which I clearly stated what I think. In my verbal comments, also, I do not conceal my unfavourable impressions. I speak to him of Cavallero and of the servility he shows in his relations with the Germans. The Duce says: "The usefulness of Cavallero is over. A few years ago he had a keen brain, but that is no longer true." However, he does not allude to the person who is to replace him. He invites me to send His Majesty a copy of my report.

Colonel Stevens<sup>344</sup> has made a radio comment on my visit to Germany which is quite amusing. He recalls my speech before the Chamber on December 16th, 1939, and maintains that I am the person best fitted to speak clearly to the British because I have done so since that time.

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<sup>344</sup> Colonel H. R. G. Stevens: British Broadcasting Corporation military commentator.



DECEMBER 23, 1942. Nothing new.

DECEMBER 24, 1942. The King has words of approval for my report on my return from Germany. He is indignant about the fact that Ribbentrop has asked for some of our small ships. The tone of the King's conversation is, as always, anti-German, but he says nothing in particular and concludes with the usual formal and unconvincing affirmation of victory.

We are at loggerheads again on the question of the bombing of Rome. From an intercepted British telegram we learn that in addition to the departure of the Duce and the Military Commands from Rome, Eden also wants the King and the whole Government to go, with Swiss officials controlling the evacuation. Naturally Mussolini protested vigorously and is preparing to refuse. Yesterday I was in his room while he was listening to the Pope's speech on the radio. He commented on it with sarcasm: "The Vicar of God, who is the representative on Earth of the Ruler of the Universe, should never speak; he should remain in the clouds. This is a speech of platitudes which might better be made by the parish priest of Predappio."<sup>345</sup>

News from Russia still bad, but at the High Command they believe that this time the Russians will not succeed in taking strategic advantage of their initial successes.

DECEMBER 25, 1942. At Algiers Darlan has been assassinated—three revolver shots. Are the de Gaullists, the British, or the Germans to be blamed? He was shot by a young man, twenty years of age, and therefore either a fanatic or an agent. Perhaps we shall come to know the truth. However, it is interesting to note the cold indifference with which the British press has commented on the news.

Fougier is very deeply pessimistic. As far as he is concerned the war is already lost; in fact, it was lost some time ago, and now the only thing that remains is to find the way to end it as soon as possible and with the least harm to ourselves. In his opinion the scarcity of equipment has become so acute as to render any kind of serious military operation inconceivable—at least for the Air Force.

DECEMBER 26, 1942. Horia Sima, head of the Rumanian

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<sup>345</sup> Predappio: Mussolini's native village.

legion, has arrived in Italy. Since he got out of Germany with a false passport, Himmler demands his extradition. For my part, I advised the Duce to grant his extradition forthwith, especially since his presence here would create friction with Antonescu. And then, all things considered, there will be one crook the less.

To-day Princess di Gangi, who had a cordial friendship with the Duce, opened her heart to me about the Petacci affair, without any prompting from me, talking, as she said in her Sicilian accent, "as in the confessional". According to her, Mussolini has had enough of Claretta, her brother, her sister, and all of them, but he can't get rid of them because they are bad people, ready to blackmail and create a scandal. Speaking with the Princess di Gangi, the Duce is supposed to have said that he once loved this girl (Claretta Petacci), but that now she is "revolting" to him. How much truth is there in this and how much of it is dormant feminine jealousy? Anyway, the Gangi woman blames the Petaccis for everything that is going badly in Italy, including the Duce's ailments, which seems to me, frankly, a bit exaggerated.

DECEMBER 27, 1942. I go to Leghorn to say good-bye to Emilia, my dear old faithful Tata, who is slowly dying. She is eighty-two and has many ailments. I have loved her very tenderly. Yesterday afternoon was one of the unhappiest days of my life.

DECEMBER 28, 1942. No news of any importance in Rome. I didn't see the Duce because he is in bed with a kind of influenza. His health is not what I should like it to be.

Mackensen sends me, in the name of the German Government, the telegram in answer to Laval, regarding his requests made in the forest of Görlitz. It makes very modest concessions, entirely matters of form. Not hard to agree with, so far as we are concerned.

DECEMBER 29, 1942. Buffarini shows me the written report of the Rimini police which the Duce asked for to-day. It is nothing more than a mediocre and banal piece of gossip spread in Tirana by people I don't know and who gossiped about me, saying that I was seeking to become the Duce's successor and other such absurdities. I told Buffarini to show the report to Mussolini immediately, who will easily judge it

for what it is worth. I am only sorry that there are people who bring such silly reports to the Duce, and that he, after knowing me for so many years, can listen to them, even though he does not take them seriously.

Buti is here in transit. He says nothing new. The whole of France is now convinced that Germany will lose the war, and everybody awaits the day. Laval is despised, but he is supported because they fear the worst; that is, they fear Doriot, who is considered a gangster. Buti used a picturesque simile in talking about Franco-German relations: a driver who whips his mule crying: "Collaboration, collaboration!"

DECEMBER 30, 1942. Donegani rushed to the Palazzo Chigi to advise against the proposed customs union with Germany. In fact somebody had mentioned it, though I can't remember who, but the idea had been bluntly rejected because the enormous loss which we should suffer is too obvious. It would be like opening the doors of our house while the doors of others remained locked. The Germans have had enough from us. Are they still dissatisfied?

A good point on the question of the bombing of Rome: from an intercepted telegram we learn that the Americans have said no to Eden's draconian request, declaring that they do not intend to bomb the city of St. Peter because there would be more disadvantages than advantages for the Allies. It seems to me that the matter can now be shelved. At least for the time being.

DECEMBER 31, 1942. Emilia died to-night. With her dies another part of my youth. Perhaps no one in the world has lavished upon me such sweet and constant tenderness. In her opinion I have never grown up; man, youth, adolescent, it was all the same. She surrounded me with the same concern that she had for me as a child. She was generous, honest, and extremely faithful. To-day I have suffered the deepest sorrow of my life, after the death of my father and that of Maria.

I received Colonel Montezemolo, sent to me by Cavallero with the approval of the Duce, to explain what is to be done in Tripolitania; namely, to evacuate it. It is impossible to send sufficient supplies and reinforcements. Everything for Libya is used up in Tunisia and supplies are already very scarce.

Now Cavallero's order of the day is: optimism regarding Tunisia, pessimism regarding Tripolitania. Only a few days ago he was optimistic about all sectors. We shall see. Montezemolo, whom I asked about his personal opinion on our prospects in Tunisia, answered: "I believe that we shall be able to resist for a long time." He did not wish to compromise himself.

An interesting conference with Colonel Lucca<sup>346</sup> who has just come from Constantinople. As is well known, he is a very good friend of Saracoglu. The latter told him two or, rather, three things: that what is happening to the Axis is no longer looked upon with optimism in Turkey; that Russia would not be adverse to making a separate peace; that Turkey would behave just as the Bulgarians did to Germany if Great Britain violated her neutrality. I have asked Lucca for a written report.

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JANUARY 1, 1943. Nothing particularly new except a great flowering of courteously worded telegrams from the Nazi chiefs. It is a sign of the times.

Hitler's message to the German people and the one that he sent to the armed forces I did not like very much. They reveal a great deal of concern, which is logical, but it is not wise to announce it to a public which is already perplexed.

JANUARY 2, 1943. Pietromarchi has had a long conference with the Pope. Without assuming any responsibility, the Holy Father said that he now believes that the danger of the bombing of Rome has been averted. He has informed whoever it may concern that he would protest vigorously and immediately. He has found better co-operation in Washington than in London, and this is understandable. He did not give any opinion on the situation but shows that he is informed as to what the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is doing to prevent

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<sup>346</sup> Colonel Lucca: Italian Military Attaché in Ankara.

massacre and ruin in the occupied territories. He ended by sending me his greetings and his blessing.

I took Colonel Lucca to the Duce. The former is now convinced that we cannot make a separate peace with Russia. Two months ago he considered it feasible, but now that the Cossacks are advancing towards the Donetz basin and Veliki Luki has fallen, Stalin wants to impose impossible terms. However, he feels that before long the situation may offer better prospects. That the situation on the Russian front is very depressing is confirmed by Antonescu, who considers the German mistakes as "strategic and therefore capable of having serious consequences".

I have prepared a memorandum for the Duce on the real situation in Croatia, Dalmatia, and Montenegro as it is developing after our understanding with the Chetniks. It is very precarious and dangerous.

JANUARY 3, 1943. Nothing new.

JANUARY 4, 1943. The Duce asked me to give von Mackensen a copy of a telegram the Turkish Ambassador Zorlu sent to his government from Kuibyshev. It is a description of the Soviet situation. It seems impartial and quite informative. According to him, the war weighs heavily on the Russians, but Russia is still strong and, in the judgment of the diplomatic corps in Kuibyshev, Axis stock is falling.

I am thinking about gifts for Goering on his fiftieth birthday. The Duce is giving him a gold sword carved by Messina (which was originally meant to go to Franco, but times have changed). I will give him a star of San Maurizio studded with diamonds (originally meant for Zog and kept in the safe all this time). The Duce's indifference to personal possessions is moving. At home he owns only one good piece: a self-portrait by Mancini, which was a gift from the painter. Well, when he heard that a gift had to be made to Goering and that the Ministry of Fine Arts had difficulty in finding something worth while, he immediately thought of giving his Mancini. I had to argue a great deal to make him change his mind.

JANUARY 5, 1943. I see the Duce after two days. I find him tired. Edda says that the pains in his stomach have increased though he takes only liquid food. He is depressed

about the situation in Libya. He realizes that the loss of Tripoli will cut deeply into the morale of the people. He would like a desperate house-to-house defence like that in Stalingrad. He knows that this is impossible. The city can be broken into from all sides, and can be shelled from the sea. He has harsh words for Cavallero and for "that madman Rommel, who thinks of nothing but retreating in Tunisia".

JANUARY 6, 1943. I talked with Roatta and Geloso. With the former I discussed the Chetnik problem. He also realizes the danger that the Chetniks represent now and will represent in the future. He declares that in order to carry out the German plan of extermination we need a great many more troops than both we and Germany can afford. I believe that, as things stand, he is not wrong. But how about to-morrow? The fact is that military forces are scarce. In Africa, Russia, the Balkans, the occupied countries, everywhere new and greater forces are needed. At times I have the impression that the Axis is like a man who is trying to cover himself with a blanket that is too small. His head is cold if he warms his feet, and his feet freeze if he wants to keep his head warm.

Geloso, too, draws a rather depressing picture of the situation in Greece. He thinks, however, that the forces at his disposal are sufficient to repel a British attack, at least in the initial phase. Both of these generals see a gloomy future, and, without confessing it openly, make unhappy forecasts.

Alfieri sends a long report on the German situation. For the first time he comes to pessimistic conclusions without even bothering to suggest palliatives. This must be hard for him, since he has been the zealous representative of unconditional optimism.

JANUARY 7, 1943. Japan wants to sign economic agreements with Germany and with us, in which the sphere of each of the three countries would be defined and specific preferential tariffs agreed upon. Since our position of inferiority is obvious, I put a spoke in the wheel.

Pirelli puts all his cards on the table. He describes his conversation with a Swiss banker just arrived from London, and frankly admits that he now believes that the war has been won by the Allies. He gives no news; confirms the fact that it

is easier for us to find understanding in Washington than in London.

General Dalmasso views the Albanian situation with remarkable tranquillity so long as there is no attack from the outside. This would bring many painful surprises.

JANUARY 8, 1943. I have seen the Duce again after three days and find him looking worse. It seems that Frugoni, too, in these last few days has expressed his concern. But in my humble opinion, what is doing his health more harm than anything else is his uneasiness about the situation. He has rage in his heart over the abandonment of Tripoli, and suffers for it. As usual, he hurled bitter words at the military, who do not make war with the "fury of the fanatic, but rather with the indifference of the professional".

I have lunch with Bottai and Farinacci. Both are furious. In speaking of the loss of Libya, Bottai says: "After all, it is another goal that has been reached. In 1911 Mussolini uttered his 'away from Libya'. After thirty-two years he has kept his word."

The brazen-faced Dr. Petacci has sent me a letter through De Giacomo, which, in peremptory terms advances the candidacy of his partner, Vezzari, to the Spanish Embassy. Vezzari is an old gaolbird, an ignorant man, a swindler, and obscene. I have rejected the letter. If it were not that Mussolini is unwell and I do not want to worry him, I would speak of it to him. But there will be time to do so.

JANUARY 9, 1943. Vittorio<sup>347</sup> speaks to me about the Duce's health. In the last few days he has had very severe gastric pains, which is serious, because they drastically reduce his consumption of food. All the doctors agree in saying that there is no organic trouble. Vittorio is convinced, as I am, that the source of the disturbance is nervous.

Wang Ching-wei declares war on the Allies. The event is of no practical importance, even though we play it up with large headlines for home consumption. I speak frankly to the Duce about it. As far as Italy is concerned, we are giving up our concession at Tientsin, which is not very important, but it

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<sup>347</sup> Vittorio: Mussolini's son.

was, nevertheless, a heritage of the past and is personally very dear to me.

JANUARY 10, 1943. I think the Germans would do well to watch the Rumanians. I see a reversal of attitude in the words of Mihai Antonescu. The sudden will for conciliation with Hungary is suspicious to me. If the Russian offensive had not been so successful I doubt that all this would have taken place. There is something peculiar going on in Finland also; we should be careful.

Goering, to whom Martin Franklin<sup>348</sup> to-day handed the first Gold Star of the Roman Eagle, expressed his thanks so vociferously that his childish joy was obvious.

JANUARY 11, 1943. Von Mackensen telephoned during the night on Ribbentrop's orders to inform us that Pétain was preparing to leave Vichy, bound for his villa near Marseilles. The move is suspicious: preparations for an escape to Algeria? In any case, orders have been given to the troops to watch the movements of the old Marshal closely, and the French Government was told that it would be best for Pétain not to move. Mussolini telephoned me early, wishing further particulars, which I have not got. Then, suddenly, he left for Forlì. His leaving can be explained by his bad health; and as the meeting of the Council of Ministers, planned for the 16th, has been indefinitely postponed, this will cause inevitable gossip.

Marshal Antonescu, talking with Bova Scoppa, mentioned something about the German secret weapon, which is supposed to do wonders: a multiple-barrelled electric gun; no armour could withstand its impact. Any truth in it? Is this the weapon that Hitler alluded to in his speech? Or is it the usual hot air?

JANUARY 12, 1943. The Prince of Piedmont has sent for d'Aieta to tell him that in military circles my action to avert the bombing of Rome has been favourably received, but adds that all now desire the further removal of the German Commands, and no more shilly-shallying about this. Blasco d'Aieta showed the Prince the transcript of my report on my recent visit to the German High Command.

A long conference in the Casa Colonna with Monsignor

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<sup>348</sup> Martin Franklin: Italian Ambassador in Paris.



Montini, who, from what is said, has really close relations with the Holy Father. He acted prudently, reservedly, and like an Italian. He did not express any opinion on the military situation but said only that in the Vatican they think that the struggle will still be hard and long. He added that in so far as he is able to do anything for our country he is completely at our disposal. I spoke to him of the importance that we must attach to the internal order of our country at all times, and he agreed. The Church will always work for this. Though he is anti-Bolshevist, he nevertheless expresses admiration and surprise at what Stalin has been able to do. He said: "One thing is important: whatever the future may bring, our people have given singular proof of strength, faith, and discipline. These are qualities that will bring about their complete revival."

JANUARY 13, 1943. Kruia has submitted his resignation. The Governor is planning to replace him with Ekrem Libohova, who was Minister for Foreign Affairs at the time of Zog, or with Kensal Vrioni. In fact, it is planned to return to the government of the beys, who still have a considerable influence in the country and are in a strong position to influence public opinion.

Suardo tells me that he once asked Senator Borea d'Olmo, who was secretary to Cavour, for his own personal reminiscences of the great statesman. "He used to eat a great deal," was the only answer that he got. Certain ideas come to mind spontaneously.

JANUARY 14, 1943. Nothing new.

JANUARY 15, 1943. Mussolini telephones, wishing to know if it is true that I went to a luncheon at Farinacci's home with Bottai, Scorza,<sup>349</sup> and Turaboni. It is very true. But also nothing could be less significant. Farinacci had invited me to see his new country house; a bad luncheon, a banal conversation. Evidently somebody is trying to sow distrust and suspicion in the Duce's mind, and I am sorry that he could fall for it even for a moment.

JANUARY 16, 1943. Among our intercepts there is a telegram summarizing the terms of a conversation between the

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<sup>349</sup> Carlo Scorza: One of the first Fascists. Executed near Como, on the same day that Mussolini was executed, by Italian partisans in April, 1945.

German General von Thoma<sup>350</sup> and Montgomery. If it is true, it is serious. Von Thoma said that the Germans are convinced they have lost the war, and that the Army is anti-Nazi because it holds Hitler completely responsible. By order of the Duce I gave a copy of it to von Mackensen. There must be some truth in it because Thoma, when passing through Rome, said more or less the same thing to Bismarck.

Edda spoke with Frugoni about the Duce's health. A consultation with Cesabianchi will take place to-morrow at the Castle of Rocca. Although the ailment is of such long standing, Frugoni said there is every reason to believe that the Duce will be all right. This is good news.

JANUARY 17, 1943. Nothing new.

JANUARY 18, 1943. During the night a telegram from Tirana, in which the police inspector sounds an alarm: they can't form a government, the rebellion is growing, and we must hand over the government to the military. From Jacomoni no news. Now one thing is clear: somebody is either too calm or too nervous. I telephone to him, and in his usual veiled way he says things are quite bad, especially because Marka Gioni, the Catholic leader of Scutari, wants everything or nothing: either complete control or he will not collaborate. Jacomoni will not be blackmailed, and solves the crisis with Ekrem Libohova. This is a return to the government of the beys, the aristocratic local families. I inform the Duce, who was rather disturbed, and advised Jacomoni to take precautionary measures with the military authorities in any case. We shall see what will come of this situation, but it is clear that even in Albania we are feeling the repercussions of world events. And these events are not good. They are bad in Russia, with the German retreat assuming greater and greater proportions, and they are bad in Libya, where the threat against Tripoli appears more and more imminent.

I receive from Frugoni a rather reassuring letter about the Duce's health.

JANUARY 19, 1943. It has been a very oppressive day. News from all sectors is bad. The retreat in Russia continues

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<sup>350</sup> General Ritter Wilhelm von Thoma: Nazi Commander of the Afrika Korps. Captured by British forces in Libya.

and seems to have become a rout in some sections. In Libya, the infantry divisions are abandoning Tripoli and are marching westwards, while the rear-guard are trying to delay Montgomery's prudent but inexorable advance. I speak with Mussolini over the telephone. He seems discouraged. Since the Germans have informed us that they can no longer send to Tunisia the promised armoured forces, he is thinking of finding a corrective in an eventual declaration of war on the Anglo-Saxon Powers by the Bey. I tried to explain that this is impossible, useless, and ineffective. But he insists, and wants me to call Silimbani to Rome for a conference.

Bova Scoppa has made a report on his long conference with young Antonescu, who has returned from German headquarters. The latter was very explicit about the tragic condition of Germany and foresees the need for Rumania and Italy to make contact with the Allies in order to establish a defence against the bolshevization of Europe. I shall take the report to the Duce and shall make it the subject of a conversation which I have been planning for some time. Let us not bandage our heads before they are broken, but let us look at the situation realistically and remember that charity begins at home.

JANUARY 20, 1943. A long and interesting conversation with Ambrosio and Vercellino. These two generals, both worthy and honest men, of patriotic integrity, are very anxious about what is happening. Convinced as they are that Germany will lose the war, and that there is nothing left for us but destruction, death, and disorder, they ask how far we intend to go. Naturally they attack Cavallero violently—Cavallero who lies, consorts with the Germans, and steals all he can. I promise that I will talk frankly to the Duce, concealing nothing from him; this is what I can and must do in order to have peace with my own conscience.

In fact, taking my cue from Bova's report, I told the Duce what I thought. The Duce began by replying that "he was sure that the Germans would hold tenaciously". Then he listened to me attentively. He naturally refused Antonescu's offer, saying that "the Danube is not the route we must follow". But he did not protest when at a certain point I said openly that we, too, should try to make some direct contact.

Physically he is the same as three weeks ago. He seemed a little thinner but looks well. Mentally he is depressed.

We have chosen De Peppo for Madrid and Rosso for Ankara. They are both good.

JANUARY 21, 1943. As I anticipated, Mussolini wanted to re-read the Bova report. He described Antonescu's language as over-subtle and he reaffirmed in terms much stronger than yesterday's his decision to march with Germany to the end. In addition he hopes "that five hundred Tiger tanks, five hundred thousand men in reserve, and the new German gun may yet change the situation". Even as far as Africa is concerned, he expresses himself in the most optimistic fashion: "Our Libyan forces are entering Tunisia and we still have many trump cards to play." I do not know what they can be. I speak frankly about Albania: what we are doing is merely to apply hot compresses. We must send troops and more troops. It is now clear that we have lost the Albanians' approval as well as their trust. Only force will win—not to be used at first, but at least we should show that it is there.

General Amè is in a very black humour. He is convinced that 1943 will witness the collapse of Germany. He believes that we must begin to think of our own affairs, perhaps not at once, but certainly soon. As to Cavallero's successor, whom Mussolini intends to appoint very soon, he believes that Ago is the best candidate.

JANUARY 22, 1943. The Duce thinks that to-day's German communiqué is the worst since the beginning of the war. And it certainly is. Rout at Stalingrad, retreat everywhere on the front, and Tripoli about to fall. It appears that Rommel has again manœuvred in such a way as to save his forces, leaving the Italian troops in the lurch. Mussolini is very much irritated, and plans to have it out with the Germans. He is very unhappy over the fall of Tripoli, but isn't at all convinced that we can't counter-attack from Tunisia and retake it. Thus he continues to lull himself with many dangerous illusions, which distort his clear vision of reality—a reality which is now apparent to everybody. Naturally, Cavallero and his following are the ones really responsible for the creation of this fool's paradise.

JANUARY 23, 1943. Meeting of the Council of Ministers. After the administrative agenda Mussolini talks of the military situation. The negative side is the Allied Offensive on all land fronts, a positive side is the success of the submarine campaign. He puts a great deal of emphasis on this. (But really I can't understand why the Axis, where the element of power is represented by the German Army, should find its reasons for hope on the seas!) The Duce makes no predictions. He says, instead, incisively that this war will last "another three or four years".

To-day the communiqué announced the fall of Tripoli. On many faces, the most humble and the most sincere, I saw deep lines of pain. Many hopes are now concentrated by our propaganda on Tunisia. I fear that these are all false hopes.

JANUARY 24, 1943. General Messe informs me of a conference he had yesterday with the Duce in the presence of Cavallero. He has been made commander of the Italian forces that are flowing into Tunisia. "Commander of the dispersed forces", so Messe defines his job. He considers it a back-handed blow struck at him by Cavallero to get rid of him, since he, too, must be convinced that there are no prospects for us in Tunisia and he wants Messe to lose his reputation in a desperate gamble or even to end up in a prison camp. What surprised Messe was the language of Mussolini, who spoke of certain successes, offensive possibilities, African recoveries, etc., etc. All this is due to the fact that Cavallero describes a false situation and is deliberately deceiving the Duce.

JANUARY 25, 1943. The Royal Signature. His Majesty had a serious cold, his voice was hoarse, and he coughed. He spoke in rather general terms, avoiding any reference to the situation. As a matter of fact, he indulged in some perfunctory optimism, without missing the chance of a dig at the Germans. He talked at length about Giolitti, exalting his callousness and ignorance. Giolitti managed Parliament as no one else in the world could have. He had a notebook, each page of which was dedicated to some deputy, on which he wrote the "life, death, and miracles" of each man. Not one deputy ever escaped Giolitti's blackmail. The King himself read the page about Eugenio Chiesa, who was particularly susceptible to threats because of an old bankruptcy. To show Giolitti's ignorance,

His Majesty related that when he proposed that Michetti<sup>351</sup> should be made a senator, Giolitti asked who he was, and then telegraphed the Prefect of Naples to secure information about "a certain Michetti".

To-day's German communiqué is depressing, and announces the evacuation of Voronezh.

JANUARY 26, 1943. Nothing new.

JANUARY 27, 1943. Favagrossa confers with me about our supply situation. There are no changes, either good or bad, but now that a major effort must be made in the field of production, he thinks that there will be a notable diminution in the stocks available. However, our contribution to the production of arms is very modest: more than half and less than three-quarters of one per cent of world production.

Bismarck was received by the Duce, to whom he brought a horse offered him by the city of Bremen. Mussolini expounded a theory which he had once told me about, according to which German bulletins are purposely pessimistic in order to prepare more pleasant surprises for the German people. Bismarck does not share this theory, and was very much surprised by it.

We receive news of the Casablanca meeting.<sup>352</sup> It is too early to judge, but it seems to be a serious thing, very serious indeed. I neither share nor approve the easy ironies of our press.

JANUARY 28, 1943. The Duce continues to interpret the Russian situation rather optimistically. He believes that the Germans have men, resources, and energy to dominate the situation, and perhaps to turn it in their favour. Even in Africa he doesn't see things in gloomy colours. But he speaks more and more unfavourably about Cavallero.

One cannot point out that the Duce's ideas are different from those of Colonel Battaglini, Chief of Staff of the Third Celere Division, just back from Russia. He painted the darkest picture possible, and though it was the first time he talked to me, he said that the only way left to save Italy, the Army, and the regime itself is a separate peace. This is an idea that is taking

<sup>351</sup> Francesco Paolo Michetti (1851-1929): A most famous artist in Italy at the time.

<sup>352</sup> Casablanca meeting between Churchill and Roosevelt, when the unconditional surrender formula was announced.

root. It was mentioned to me with some approval even by Mussolini's sister.

JANUARY 29, 1943. I go to the Duce with our Consul-General at Tunis, Silimbani. He reports with some objectivity on the situation, which he considers serious. He does not see how, without the aid of very considerable armoured forces, it is possible to hold the thin strip of land to which we are now clinging when the double Anglo-American pressure begins. The conference will continue to-morrow.

Anfuso has written from Budapest a keen and interesting letter which Mussolini praised very much. There are no actual facts as yet, but many indications lead one to believe that Hungary has already had some contact with the Anglo-Saxons. Besides, Mariassy asked d'Aieta with a good deal of anxiety to-day if it were true that the Rumanians had been negotiating with the British and that conversations were under way in Lisbon. D'Aieta denied this, but, in reality, what do we know about it?

Grandi is insisting that I send the foreign service official, Casardi,<sup>353</sup> as First Secretary to Madrid. It may be a coincidence, but Casardi is half English, has an American wife, and was with Grandi when Samuel Hoare, who is now Ambassador to Spain, was Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

JANUARY 30, 1943. Ambrosio takes the place of Cavallero as Chief of Staff. This is a good change, imposed by honesty, by events, and by the resentment of all Italians against a man who has always lied for his own self-interest and for the sake of his career. Ambrosio is respected in the Army. He isn't considered a thunderbolt, but anyway, under present conditions, I don't think that even a Napoleon Bonaparte could work miracles. What is important is that at the head of our armed forces there is an Italian, a patriot who sees things as they really are with honest eyes, and who intends to put the interest of the country above everything else. Ambrosio, to judge from the conversations I have had with him, is of this sort.

JANUARY 31, 1943. The replacing of Cavallero has produced joy among Italians and dissatisfaction among the

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<sup>353</sup> Aubrey Casardi: Secretary at the Italian Embassy in London and later in Berlin.

Germans. Bismarck has become the mouthpiece of the latter, and praises the excellent collaboration which the Marshal has given to the German armed forces. Naturally, I said that the event did not have any political significance: reasons of an internal and military nature had determined it. Besides, the Germans had changed their Chief of Staff three times and the removal of Admiral Raeder took place only yesterday.

In a conversation with me Ambrosio confirms what we said the last time we met. He is an honest man who will act in the interests of the country rather than in his own interest.

The event of the day: the meeting of Churchill and members of the Turkish Government. De Peppo and Alfieri do not attach too much importance to the meeting. Mussolini, when informed by telephone, said that this proves the weakness of the British, "if Churchill must go to the trouble of begging for Turkish help". I cannot share this much too optimistic interpretation. It is the Casablanca plan which is being applied, and Turkey is a base of too much importance not to be exploited. I do not yet feel sure that the Turks have been neutralized, as Berlin believes or says.

FEBRUARY 1, 1943. Mussolini delivered a very proud speech for the Twentieth Anniversary of the Fascist militia. It wasn't an optimistic speech; he talked not of victory, but of fighting.

News from Albania is disturbing; the Libohova Government is also up to tricks. The men who were most faithful to us are trying to abandon the ship. Even Vrioni. Even Verlaçi. These are signs of the times. I think that before long it will be necessary to put all power in the hands of the military.

FEBRUARY 2, 1943. Nothing new.

FEBRUARY 3, 1943. I talked to the Duce on three problems:

*Albania.* The situation is such that I think it is necessary to replace Jacomoni. For a certain period he did very well, but now his policies should be superseded. We need a man who can talk about force, and who can also employ it. I propose Guzzoni or Pariani, two generals who know the country and are well thought of. Mussolini said he would think about it and decide.



*Cavallero.* His replacement has alarmed the Germans. He was their servant. Now they fear that with his going the whole system will be changed. I reassure Bismarck, but I think it would be well if the Duce wrote to Hitler on the matter.

*Tunis.* Silimbani is pretending that he is sick, and does not want to return. No use pushing him; he has made enough of a fool of himself. I will send, instead, Bombieri, who was for many years Consul-General.

A meeting with Missiroli. He informs me in detail of the opinions expressed by eminent men of the past in various similar situations.

FEBRUARY 4, 1943. A long visit from Thaon de Revel. He has been one of the most ardent interventionists, who entirely believed in a German victory. Now he is facing a crisis, a real crisis. He opened his heart to me with a sincerity that is unusual in politics. He expects the country to be saved by the monarchy. He is even ready to invoke the help of his uncle, the Grand Admiral, who seems to have a great deal of influence with the King.

In the afternoon I go to the Royal Palace for the registration of the birth of Princess Beatrice. His Majesty had a bad cold and a tired air. The Prince of Piedmont was very cordial, and we had a brief conversation. He sees things very clearly, and no wonder he is disturbed.

FEBRUARY 5, 1943. At 4.30 in the afternoon the Duce calls me. The moment I enter the room I perceive that he is very much embarrassed. I grasp what he is trying to tell me. "What are you going to do now?" he begins, and then adds in a low voice that he is changing his entire Cabinet. I understand the reasons. I share them, and I do not intend to raise the least objection. Among the various personal solutions that he offers me I decisively reject the governorship of Albania, where I would be going as the executioner and hangman of those people to whom I promised brotherhood and equality. I choose to be Ambassador to the Holy See. It is a place of rest that may, moreover, hold many possibilities for the future. And the future, never so much as to-day, is in the hands of God. To leave the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where for seven years—and what years!—I have done my best, is certainly a

hard and sad blow. I have lived too much, in the full sense of the word, between those walls not to feel the anguish of my removal. But that does not matter. I know how to be strong and to look to the morrow, which may require an even greater liberty of action. The ways which Providence chooses are at times mysterious.

FEBRUARY 6, 1943. The Duce telephones quite early in the morning, to delay my nomination to the Holy See. "They will say that you have been put on the shelf, and you are too young to be put on the shelf." But I, who had foreseen Mussolini's vacillations, had already sent Guariglia to ask the Secretariat of State for my acceptance. A thing done is done. The Duce accepted the accomplished fact with indifference.

Acquarone informs me that the King knew nothing about my leaving the Government when he saw me on Thursday. The King is pleased about my appointment to the Vatican. Acquarone is personally enthusiastic about it.

FEBRUARY 7, 1943. Nothing new except the official announcement of my appointment to the Holy See.

FEBRUARY 8, 1943. I hand over my office at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Then I go to the Palazzo Venezia to see the Duce and take leave of him. He tells me: "Now you must consider that you are going to have a period of rest. Then your turn will come again. Your future is in my hands, and therefore you need not worry." He thanks me for what I have done and rapidly enumerates my most important services. "If they had given us three years longer we might have been able to wage war under different conditions, or perhaps it would not have been at all necessary to wage it." He then asked me if I had all my documents in order. "Yes," I answered. "I have them all in order, and remember, when hard times come—because it is now certain that hard times will come—I can document all the treacheries perpetrated against us by the Germans, one after another, from the preparation for the conflict to the war on Russia, communicated to us when their troops had already crossed the frontier. If you have need of them I shall furnish the details, or, better still, I shall, within the space of twenty-four hours, prepare that speech which I have had in my mind for three years, because I shall burst if

I do not deliver it." He listened to me in silence and almost agreed with me. To-day he was concerned about the situation, because the retreat on the Eastern Front continues to be almost a rout. He has invited me to see him frequently, "even every day". Our leave-taking was cordial, for which I am very glad, because I like Mussolini, like him very much, and what I shall miss most will be my contact with him.

DECEMBER 23, 1943.<sup>354</sup> If these notes of mine one day see the light, it will be because I took precautions to put them in safety before the Germans, through base trickery, made me a prisoner. It was not my intention, while I was writing these hasty notes, to release them for publication just as they are; rather it was my desire to fix the time of events, details, facts which would have been useful to me in the future. If Providence had granted me a quiet old age, what excellent material for my autobiography! They do not, therefore, form part of a book, but rather the raw material from which the book could have been prepared later.

But perhaps in this skeleton form and in the absolute lack of the superfluous are to be found the real merits of this diary. Events are photographed without retouching, and the impressions reported are the first, the most genuine, uninfluenced by the criticism or wisdom of later years. I was accustomed to jot down the salient happenings day by day, hour by hour, and perhaps at times repetitions or contradictions can be found, in the same way in which, very often, life repeats and contradicts itself.

Certainly if the opportunity to expand these notes had not suddenly been taken away from me, I should have wished, on the basis of other documents, or my personal recollections, to amplify the chronicle of certain days which have had peculiar and dramatic influence on the history of the world.

I should have liked to fix responsibility both of men and governments with a greater wealth of detail, but unfortunately this was impossible, even though there might come to my mind, in these last hours, so many details that I should like to have made

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<sup>354</sup> This section is headed "Introduction", clearly indicating that Ciano envisaged publication of his diaries.

known to those who to-morrow will analyse and judge events.

The Italian tragedy, in my opinion, had its beginnings in August 1939, when, having gone to Salzburg on my own initiative, I suddenly found myself face to face with the cynical German determination to provoke the conflict. The Alliance had been signed in May. I had always been opposed to it, and for a long time I had so contrived that the persistent German offers were allowed to drift. There was no reason whatever, in my opinion, for us to be bound in life and death to the destiny of Nazi Germany. Instead, I was in favour of a policy of collaboration, for in our geographical situation we are bound to detest the 80,000,000 Germans, brutally set in the heart of Europe, but we cannot ignore them. The decision to conclude the Alliance was taken by Mussolini, suddenly, while I was in Milan with von Ribbentrop. Some American newspapers had reported that this city of Lombardy had received the German Minister with hostility; and that this fact was proof of the diminished personal prestige of Mussolini.

Hence his wrath. I received by telephone the most peremptory orders to accede to the German demands for an alliance, which for more than a year I had left in a state of suspense and had thought of leaving there for a much longer time. So "The Pact of Steel" was born. A decision that has had such a sinister influence upon the entire life and future of the Italian people is due entirely to the spiteful reaction of a dictator to the irresponsible and valueless utterances of foreign journalists.

However, the Alliance had a clause that for a period of three or four years neither Italy nor Germany would create controversies capable of disturbing the peace of Europe.

Instead, in the summer of 1939 Germany advanced its anti-Polish claims, naturally without our knowledge. Moreover, von Ribbentrop repeatedly denied to our Ambassador Germany's intention to push the polemic to its final conclusion. In spite of these denials I was somewhat incredulous and wanted to be sure, and on August 11th I went to Salzburg. It was at his residence at Fuschl that von Ribbentrop, while we were waiting to be seated at the dinner table, told me of the German decision to set a match to the European powder keg. This he told me in much the same tone that he would

have used about an inconsequential administrative detail.

"Well, Ribbentrop," I asked, as we were walking together in the garden, "what do you want? The Corridor or Danzig?"

"Not that any more," he said, gazing at me with his cold metallic eyes. "We want war!"

I felt that the decision was irrevocable, and in a flash I saw the tragedy that threatened humanity. The conversations, not always cordial, which I had with my German colleague lasted for ten hours that day. Those that I had with Hitler lasted for as many hours on the two successive days. My arguments made absolutely no impression on either of them. They were like water on a duck's back. Nothing could have prevented the execution of this criminal project long meditated and fondly discussed in those sombre meetings the Führer had every evening with his intimates. The madness of the Leader had become the religion of his followers. Every objection was ruled out even if it was not ridiculed.

Their calculation was fundamentally wrong. They were sure that both France and Great Britain would remain passive during the slaughter of Poland. Convinced of this, Ribbentrop insisted on making a bet with me during one of those gloomy meals at the Oesterreichischerhof in Salzburg. If Britain and France remained neutral I would give him an Italian painting. If those Powers intervened he would give me a collection of old armour. There were many witnesses of this bet. Not long ago Ambassador Mackensen and I were talking about the incident. But von Ribbentrop has preferred to forget the bet and has never paid up—unless he believes that he is discharging his debt by having me shot in his name by a platoon of wretches in the pay of the enemy.

(At last Hitler reached the point of telling me that I, a southerner, could not understand how much he, a German, needed to get his hands on the timber of the Polish forests. . . .)

From Salzburg on, during the period of Italian neutrality and during the war, the policy of Berlin towards Italy was nothing but a network of lies, intrigue, and deceit. We were never treated like partners, but always as slaves. Every move took place without our knowledge; even the most fundamental decisions were communicated to us after they had been put

into execution. Only the base cowardice of Mussolini could tolerate this without protest, and pretend not to see it.

The attack on Russia was brought to our knowledge half an hour after the German troops had passed the eastern border. Yet this was an event of no secondary importance in the course of the conflict, even if our appraisal of the matter differed from that of the Germans.

The preceding Sunday, on June 16th, I was with von Ribbentrop in Venice discussing the inclusion of Croatia in the Tripartite Pact. The world was filled with rumours about an impending act of aggression against the Soviets, despite the fact that the ink was not yet dry on the friendship pact signed between the Germans and the Soviets. I asked my Axis colleague about it in a gondola while we were going from the Hotel Danieli to a dinner given by Count Volpi in his palace.

"Dear Ciano," said von Ribbentrop with studied deliberation. "Dear Ciano, I cannot tell you anything as yet because every decision is locked in the impenetrable bosom of the Führer. However, one thing is certain: *if we attack, the Russia of Stalin will be erased from the map within eight weeks.*"

Thus, in addition to a notable case of bad faith against Italy, there is a conspicuous misunderstanding of realities, sufficient at least to help lose a war. . . .

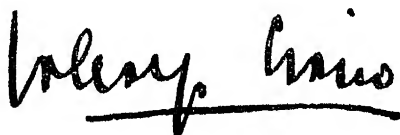
I am aware of the fact that in this explanatory note, which was meant to be no more than that, I have allowed myself to drift into the narration of some facts which are not altogether negligible nor deserving of oblivion.

Within a few days a sham tribunal will make public a sentence which has already been decided by Mussolini under the influence of that circle of prostitutes and white-slavers which for some years have plagued Italian political life and brought our country to the brink of the abyss. I accept calmly what is to be my infamous destiny. I take some comfort in the thought that I may be considered a soldier who has fallen in battle for a cause in which he truly believed. The treatment inflicted upon me during these months of imprisonment has been shameful and inhuman. I am not allowed to communicate with anyone. All contacts with persons dear to me have been

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forbidden. And yet I feel that in this cell, this gloomy Veronese cell where I am confined during my last days of this earthly life, I am surrounded by all those whom I have loved and who love me. Neither walls nor men can prevent it. It is hard to think that I shall not be able to gaze into the eyes of my three children or to press my mother to my heart, or my wife, who in my hours of sorrow has revealed herself a strong, sure, and faithful companion. But I must bow to the will of God, and a great calm is descending upon my soul. I am preparing myself for the Supreme Judgment.

In this state of mind which excludes any falsehood I declare that not a single word of what I have written in my diary is false or exaggerated or dictated by selfish resentment. It is all just what I have seen and heard. And if, when making ready to take leave of life, I consider allowing the publication of my hurried notes, it is not because I expect posthumous revaluation or vindication, but because I believe that an honest testimonial of the truth in this sad world may still be useful in bringing relief to the innocent and striking at those who are responsible.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Cesare Gino". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Cesare" is written above the second name "Gino", which is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

December 23, 1943, Cell 27 of the Verona Gaol.

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